

A LATE CONFESSION

BY ELSIE SINGMASTER

HAVING described the Battle of Gettysburg and having escorted his passengers safely to the 5:33 train, Captain Hill stabled his horses. He had not spoken with his usual eloquence, and now as he worked a frown wrinkled his forehead. When he had finished, he did not go up the board walk to the kitchen and his wife's good supper, as was his custom, but stole down the alley to the corner, and then walked a block farther to the Palace Hotel, on whose porch he spent with his fellow-guides the idle hours when the trains brought no tourists.

With an air of anxiety and depression he mounted the steps and stood leaning against a post. He was a thin little man of uncertain age, neatly dressed in a blue suit, and wearing a bright-red necktie and on his lapel a bronze button. His red tie and his blue suit and his crisp white curls suggested the flag which he adored. He had been a private soldier, but the tourists called him Captain, and he never disclaimed the title, holding it to be a small distinction compared to that which he deserved.

Transportation over the battlefield was still by means of wagons, and he had many pleasant conversations with his patrons.

"You must have been very brave," they would say.

"Well, it took some grit," Henry always answered.

"How old are you?"

"Well, my pension papers say forty-five"—or "fifty-five," or "sixty-five," as the case might be. To-day he had said sixty-five with a little shudder. If ever a human being wished that Time's clock would stand still, that human being was Henry. His horror of appearing old had its source both in vanity and in a dread of weakness and senility. He had a curious conviction that one could cheat Time—a conviction more common among women than among men. He kept his shoulders straight and his clothing immaculate, and he walked with a brisk gait which was sometimes painful.

His wife, Hetty, felt no such horror; she spoke with incomprehensible indifference of growing old, confessing freely that she was almost seventy, and giving herself all the comforts of age—a nap in the afternoon, a seat by the stove when her tasks were done, and the wearing of clothes which had long ceased to be fashionable. She did not observe that to Henry the very subject of age was unpleasant, that he even left the room when it was mentioned. She did not know exactly how old he was when she had married him—they were both middle-aged, and she took him as he was and concerned herself little about his past, even about the number of years that he had lived.

It was the thought of Hetty which at this moment depressed her husband. Compelled by necessity, he was about to deal

her a hard blow, to shake the foundations of her placid life.

He realized after he had leaned for fifteen minutes against the post that he could not stay here forever. Six o'clock had struck, the shades of the stores had been drawn, and the street was deserted. Trembling, he approached his dwelling. Once his step faltered, and several times his eyes grew dim. Once he stopped and stood in deep thought. Was it not tomorrow that the landlord was coming? No, it was this evening.

Exactly two weeks ago he had escorted over the field the Governor of North Carolina and his family. He was in fine spirits, the Governor and his family were pleasant and talkative, and Henry flattered himself that he had achieved that happy impartiality which made the battle seem a victory for both sides, and which would result in an addition to the usual fee. The addition was forthcoming, and Henry had the satisfaction of being complimented before all the other guides.

"You certainly told us an interesting story."

The Governor was the last to say farewell.

"How old are you, my friend?"

"My pension papers say sixty-five," said Henry, with a little shiver at this unpleasant query. He wished that his pension papers said thirty-five.

But the subject of age was again thrust before him. He saw with regret that the attention of the other guides was not directed to him, but was given to old Billy Gude, one of their number. Billy was excited.

"I tell you it helps me!"

"What helps you?" asked Henry.

"I get more pension—twenty dollars instead of fifteen." The tears stood in Billy's eyes. Neither he nor any of them was rich. Their business had seasons, like the millinery business, and all the uncertainties of a lottery.

"How so?" asked Henry, excitedly.

"If you do, I do."

"No, you don't."

"Why not?"

"You're not old enough."

"Not old enough?"

"No, the increase begins at seventy."

"Oh!" said Henry. He drew a deep breath. A hundred extra dollars a month could not pay one for being seventy!

He had gone slowly down the street and into his kitchen, conscious of the need of warm food and of an appreciative audience. He did not like Billy Gude, who was his professional rival.

But peace of mind was not to be his. He saw when they sat down at the table that Hetty was pale.

"What is the matter, Hetty?"

Hetty clasped her hands upon her breast. She was built after a generous pattern of soul and body and should have had a large family of children to care for

in addition to one little man. Now tragedy was in her gesture and her voice.

"He's raised the rent on us, Pop!"

"How much has he raised it?"

"Five dollars."

"The scoundrel!"

"He made a new fence and papered and rebuilt the shed. I guess it is not too much."

Henry sensed dimly a coincidence. Ah, yes! five dollars a month was the extra sum which Billy Gude was to receive. He felt an unwarranted anger against Billy and a still more unreasonable anger against Hetty.

"Well, well!" he cried, testily. Then for the first time in his married life he roared at Hetty. He had a surprisingly deep voice.

"Don't be a cry-baby! Crying won't help it."

Hetty dried her eyes.

"When'll this raise begin?" demanded Henry in the same round tone. He spoke as an impertinent child might speak addressing an adult.

"He will come for the next rent two weeks from to-night."

When supper was over, Henry went upstairs and looked at himself in the mirror, as though to trace the ravages wrought by the announcement. He seemed terrified. After a while he went downstairs and out of the house, ignoring Hetty and her tears.

As he walked he planned and rejected plans. They had long expected an increase in the rent, and, as Hetty said, it was not unjust. But he had made no arrangements to meet it. He did not know how to meet it now. Their living expenses were almost nothing, and could not well be reduced. They dared not save less than they were saving; the possibility of having to discontinue his small weekly deposits in the bank was not to be considered.

There was one thing they could do—he faced the thought at last boldly. They could take a few rooms instead of a whole house. There were on the first floor a parlor, sitting-room, and kitchen. They could do with one room instead of three. On the second floor were three rooms. They needed but one, and they did not need an attic at all. The boldness which he felt was boldness not for himself but for Hetty. It was she who liked space; but what was the use of possessing space if you did not use it? With a long sigh, he turned homeward, thankful that he need say nothing to Hetty to-night.

The bill for the increase in pensions was the chief topic among the guides. Business was not brisk the next morning; for instance, though the weather was pleasant, only half a dozen tourists arrived and all could be accommodated in one carriage. Billy Gude thanked Heaven loudly that he was seventy-one.

"I can live even if the ungrateful!

people don't care nothing for their country," he declared.

When Henry went home at noon, it seemed to him that Hetty looked at him suspiciously. He had racked his brains to think of another way of adding to his income. But work was scarce, especially work which could be done by an old man. There was a way of getting more money, even without earning it, but this method he could not consider.

In the middle of the afternoon he had suddenly a great fright. A few tourists had come in on the noon train and he had taken them to the summit of Round Top and stood there, his whip in his gesticulating hand.

"There in that tree a little sharpshooter sixteen years old was found dead. He had tied himself fast with his belt, he—"

Henry ceased to explain, he grew quite white and turned his horses homeward. His passengers perceived his haste and accused him of cheating them. When they reached the station, they paid his fee with loud objections.

Hurrying home, he discovered with deep relief that Hetty had gone out. He climbed to the attic like a thief and opened an old chest. Hidden under his clothing was a package wrapped in newspaper. This he carried downstairs and out into the yard, looking meanwhile constantly over his shoulder as though he feared pursuit.

But this strange performance did not set his heart at rest. In the same spot the next afternoon he grew pale, and again he hastened home. Now he took the package from the haymow and hid it under the seat of the carriage.

The following morning, as he drove round Culp's Hill, he left his passengers and crossed a meadow to Rock Creek. There he stood looking down into a pool deep enough to hide his package or even a larger object.

Hetty each day grew a little paler, but he did not see; indeed, he did not look directly at her. He believed that she resented his poverty; he feared that she suspected him of still another defect. She was the soul of honor, the never-failing advocate of straightforward dealing, and he had for many years deceived her grossly.

A week passed in misery; a second Sunday came and went. Henry believed sometimes that his mind was failing. Once he placed Rickett's battery on Culp's Hill, and once, delivering to Union tourists the story designed for Confederates, was sharply called to account. He could not bear to meet the look on Hetty's face when he told her that she would have to leave the little house where she had lived for so many years; the house to which her furniture seemed to have grown fast; the house which he acknowledged in moments of humiliation he should have been able to buy for her. He felt willing to sacrifice all things for her but one thing, to make it possible for her to stay by any means but one.

He realized at last that he must quicken his steps. A woman was watching his halting progress from her window; next

thing she would suspect that he was not sober or, worse still, that he was failing. He could no longer postpone his announcement; the landlord would pay his visit immediately after supper. There was no trouble to find the ready cash to meet the first few payments—he had that in his pocket at this moment; the difficulty was to arrange a future budget. The sooner Hetty was told, the more merciful it would be.

When he entered the house, he was startled. He had reproached himself because he was keeping Hetty's good supper waiting, but there was no supper! The stove was cold, the table bare. Had she fled? Was she ill? Too frightened to move, he stood holding to the door-knob.

Then he heard a sound. Hetty was not dead, nor was she ill; he heard her stirring in the parlor. She was dear to him, even though for two weeks he had scarcely spoken to her. He forgot all other anxieties in his need to be assured of her existence.

He walked trembling toward the sitting-room and looked in. He saw there a strange picture. Hetty usually accomplished her cleaning in his absence; she never troubled him to help, as other men were troubled. When Mrs. Gude was cleaning house, Billy had sometimes to wash the dishes, and Jackie Barsinger, a lion among his mates, was set frequently to the washtub.

But now Hetty was cleaning in the evening, of all times! Her old clock, inherited from her grandfather, had been moved out from the wall and its pendulum lay upon the table; the ancient sideboard, beautiful in design, stood with empty drawers. Hetty appeared that moment in the parlor doorway, a Windsor chair in her arms. She had lost flesh, her cheeks drooped, there were tears in her eyes.

"What in the world does this mean?" asked Henry.

Hetty set down the heavy chair.

"I thought I would begin. This evening I will untack the parlor carpet, and these things had to come out."

"Untack the parlor carpet?" Had she seen into his mind and read there her fate?

"Well, I got to thinking what we could do to live, and it seemed that all we could do was to move. I am willing." The tears now ran in streams down her cheeks and dripped upon the bosom of her dress. "I don't want to make a fuss about it. It is just because I have been here so long."

Henry leaned weakly against the door frame. It would seem that the way to his announcement was prepared. A meaner man might have rejoiced because the suggestion that they move came from Hetty. But Henry was not mean. In his heart surged two opposing tides. He had promised to take care of her, but in the hour of trial she had leaned upon him as upon a broken reed. Finding him of no account, she had gone quietly to work to save the situation with the means at her command.

"I will try to make it pleasant in a smaller place," she promised. "I think

we can get rooms over the grocery store, but I thought you would rather make the arrangements."

The tide threatened now to overwhelm Henry. She always had his dignity at heart. And this sacrifice need not be—the was another means; the situation could be saved by a word, and the sideboard drawers could be filled, the Windsor chair be restored to its place by the parlor window, the pendulum be hung back again in the old clock. But he could not say the word; if he did, his enemy would have him by the throat. His logic was of a curious variety, but he believed that by confessing he would yield that which was precious as life itself, that which was actually life.

Hetty observed him pityingly.

"I will get your supper right away," said she. "I am sorry I am late."

Again Henry was deeply moved. She had always taken him at his own valuation; she had listened to him, spared him, accommodated herself to him, believed his every word. Her only thought was for him. Even now she did not suspect his perfidy. Her confidence weighted suddenly an evenly balanced scale. He crossed the room, brushing against her with apparent carelessness, and lifted the pendulum and hung it in place and turned the clock ahead. It was a symbolic act, though he did not realize it.

"This is nonsense!" he said, hoarsely. "Put your things back."

"What do you mean?" asked Hetty, faintly.

Henry turned and faced her. He was smaller than she in body and in mind and in soul, but now he achieved a moral victory greater than she had ever achieved because he had much farther to rise.

"My pension papers are wrong," he declared, hoarsely. "I am not sixty-five, I am seventy. I can have it fixed. You can put back your things. I am seventy."

Hetty thought he had lost his mind.

"It is true!" In his excitement his voice grew louder and louder and perspiration streamed down his cheeks. "The right age is in the family Bible." He almost added "in the wagon shed," but a kindly Providence saved him. He had meant to hide this, the sole testimony.

Hetty sat down heavily. He was, she thought, quite mad.

"They got it wrong on the papers and I—I just took that age."

Hetty put her hand to her head. He saw now where her difficulty lay.

"Those veterans who are seventy get five dollars more a month. There is a new bill. Don't you understand, Mom?"

"Oh!" cried Hetty. "Is it so, Henry?" She clasped her hands again upon her breast, but now the gesture was one of rapture. Then Hetty looked at him. She adored him as her rescuer; she wished to say the most completely satisfying thing wife ever said to husband. It is a pity that even our heroic deeds are sometimes so ill rewarded.

"Why, Pop," cried Hetty, "I never knew how old you were! I thought you were older than seventy!"

A WOMAN'S REASON.*

BY W. D. HOWELLS,

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I.

THE day had been very oppressive, and at half-past five in the afternoon the heat had scarcely abated, to the perception of Mr. Joshua Harkness, as he walked heavily up the Park street mall in Boston Common. When he came opposite the Brewer Fountain, with its Four Seasons of severe drouth, he stopped short, and stared at the bronze group with its insufficient dribble, as if he had never seen it before. Then he felt infirmly about the ground with his stick, stepped aside, and sank tremulously into one of the seats at the edge of the path. The bench was already partly occupied by a young man and a young woman; the young man had his arm thrown along the back of the seat behind the young woman; their heads were each tilted toward the other, and they were making love almost as frankly in that public place as they might in the seclusion of a crowded railway train. They both glanced at the intruder, and exchanged smiles, apparently of pity for his indecency, and then went on with their love-making, while Mr. Harkness, unconscious of his offense, stared eagerly out over the Common, and from time to time made gestures or signals with his stick in that direction. It was that one day of the week when people are not shouted at by a multitude of surly sign-boards to keep off the grass, and the turf was everywhere dotted with lolling and lounging groups. Perhaps, to compensate for the absence of the sign-boards (which would reappear over night like a growth of disagreeable fungi), there was an unusual number of policemen sauntering about, and it was one of these whom Mr. Harkness was trying to attract with his cane. If any saw him, none heeded, and he had to wait till a policeman came down the mall in front of him. This could not have been so long a time as it seemed to Mr. Harkness, who was breathing thickly, and, now and then, pressing his hand against his forehead, like one who tries to stay a reeling brain.

"Please call a carriage," he panted, as the officer, whom he had thrust in the side with his cane, stopped and looked down at him;

and then, as the man seemed to hesitate, he added: "My name is Harkness; I live at 9 Beacon Steps; I wish to go home at once; I've been taken faint."

Beacon Steps is not Beacon street, but it is of like blameless social tradition, and the name, together with a certain air of moneyed respectability in Mr. Harkness, had its effect with the policeman.

"Sick?" he asked. "Well, you *are* pale. You just hold on a minute. Heh, there! heh!" he shouted to a passing hackman, who promptly stopped, turned his horses, and drew up beside the curb next the Common. "Now you take my arm, Mr. Harkness, and I'll help you to the carriage." He raised the gentleman to his benumbed feet, and got him away through the gathering crowd; when he was gone, the crowd continued to hang about the place where he had been sitting, in such numbers that the young man first took his arm down from the back of the seat and the young woman tilted her head away from his, and then they both, with vexed and impatient looks, rose and walked away, seeking some other spot for the renewal of their courtship.

The policeman had not been able to refrain from driving home with Mr. Harkness, whom he patronized on the way with a sort of municipal kindness; and for whom, when he had got him indoors and comfortably stretched upon a lounge in the library, he wanted to go and call the doctor. But Mr. Harkness refused, saying that he had had these attacks before, and would soon be all right. He thanked the officer by his name, after asking him for it, and the officer went away, leaving Mr. Harkness to the care of the cook, who, in that mid-summer time, seemed to have sole charge of the house and its master. The policeman flipped the dust from the breast and collar of his coat, in walking back to his beat, with the right feeling of a man who would like to be better prepared if summoned a second time to befriend a gentleman of Mr. Harkness's standing, and to meet, in coming out of his house, a young lady of such beauty and elegance as he had just encountered. This young lady, as he closed the door behind

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him, had run up the steps with the loop of her train in one hand, after the fashion of ten years ago, and in the other a pretty traveling-bag, carried with the fearlessness of a lady who knows that people are out of town. She glanced a little wonderingly, a little defiantly, at the policeman, who, seeing that she must drop one or other of her burdens to ring, politely rang for her.

"Thank you!" said the young lady, speaking a little more wonderingly, a little more defiantly than she had looked.

"Quite welcome, Miss," returned the policeman, and touched his hat in going down the steps, while the young lady turned and stared after him, leaning a little over the top step on which she stood, with her back to the door. She was very pretty indeed, with blue eyes at once tender and honest, and the fair hair, that goes with her beauty, hanging loosely upon her forehead. Her cheeks, in their young perfection of outline, had a flush beyond their usual delicate color; the heat, and her eager dash up the steps, had suffused them with a dewy bloom, that seemed momentarily to deepen and soften. Her loveliness was saved from the insipidity of faultless lines by a little downward curve, a quirk, or call it dimple, at one corner of her mouth, which, especially in repose, gave it a touch of humorous feeling and formed its final charm: it seemed less a trait of face than of character. That fine positive grace, which is called style, and which is so eminently the gift of exquisite nerves, had not cost her too much; she was slim, but not fragile, and her very motionlessness suggested a vivid, bird-like mobility; she stood as if she had alighted upon the edge of the step. At the opening of the door behind her she turned alertly from the perusal of the policeman's retreating back, and sprang within.

"How d' do, Margaret?" She greeted the cook in a voice whose bright kindness seemed a translation of her girlish beauty into sound. "Surprised to see me?" She did not wait for the cook's answer, but put down her bag and began pulling off her gloves, after shaking out her skirt, and giving that penetrating sidelong downward look at it which women always give their drapery at moments of arrival or departure. She turned into the drawing-room from the hall, and went up to the long, old-fashioned mirror, and glanced at the face which it dimly showed her in the close-shuttered room. Her face had apparently not changed since she last saw it in that mirror, and one might have fancied that the young lady was somehow surprised at this.

"May I ask *why* policemen are coming and going, in and out of our house, Mar-

garet?" she demanded of the cook's image, which, further down in the mirror, hesitated at the doorway.

"He come home with your father, Miss Helen," answered the cook, and as Helen turned round and stared at her in the flesh, she continued: "He had one of his faint turns in the Common. He's laying down in the library now, Miss Helen."

"Oh, poor papa!" wailed the young lady, who knew that in spite of the cook's pronoun, it could not be the policeman who was then reposing from faintness in the library. She whirled away from the mirror, and swooped through the doorway into the hall, and back into the room where her father lay. "The heat has been too much for him," she moaned, in mixed self-reproach and compassion, as she flew; and she dropped upon her knees beside him, and fondly caressed his gray head, and cooed and lamented over him, with the irreverent tenderness he liked her to use with him.

"Poor old fellow," she murmured. "It's too bad! You're working yourself to death, and I'm going to stay with you now, and put a stop to your being brought home by policemen. Why, you ought to be ashamed, breaking down in this way, as soon as my back is turned? Has Margaret done everything for you? Wouldn't you like a little light?" She started briskly to her feet, flung up the long window, and raising and lowering the shade to get the right level for her father's eyes, stood silhouetted against the green space without: a grass plot between high brick walls, on one of which clambered a grape-vine, and on the other a wistaria, while a bed of bright-leaved plants gave its color in the center of the yard. "There!" she said, with a glance at the succinct landscape. "That's the prettiest bit of nature I've seen since I left Boston." She came back and sat down on a low chair beside her father, who smiled fondly upon her, and took one of her hands to hold, while she pushed back his hair with the other.

"Are you awfully glad to see me?"

"Awfully," said Mr. Harkness, falling in with her mood, and brightening with the light and her presence. "What brought you so suddenly?"

"Oh, *that's* a long story. Are you feeling better now?"

"Yes, I was merely faint. I shall be all right by morning. I've been a little worn out."

"Was it like the last time?" asked Helen.

"Yes," said her father.

"A little more like?"

"I don't think it was more severe," said Mr. Harkness, thoughtfully.

"What had you been doing? Honor bright, now; was it accounts?"

"Yes, it was accounts, my dear."

"The same old wretches?"

"The same old ones; some new ones, too. They're in hopeless confusion," sighed Mr. Harkness, who seemed to age and sadden with the thought.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what, papa," said Helen, sternly: "I want you to leave *all* accounts, old *and* new, quite alone till the cold weather comes. Will you promise?"

Harkness smiled, as wearily as he had sighed. He knew that she was burlesquing somewhat her ignorance of affairs; and yet it was not much burlesqued, after all; for her life, like that of other American girls of prosperous parentage, had been almost as much set apart from the hard realities of bread-winning as the life of a princess, as entirely dedicated to society, to the studies that refine, and the accomplishments that grace society. The question of money had hardly entered into it. Since she was a little child, and used to climb upon her father's knee, and ask him, in order to fix his status in her fairy tales, whether he was rich or poor, she might be said never to have fairly thought of that matter. Of course, she understood that she was not so rich as some girls, but she had never found that the difference was against her in society; she could not help perceiving that in regard to certain of them it was in her favor, and that she might have patronized them if she had liked, and that they were glad of her friendship on any terms. Her father's great losses had come when she was too young to see the difference that they made in his way of living; ever since she could remember they had kept to the same scale of simple ease in the house where she was born, and she had known no wish that there had not been money enough to gratify. Pleasures of every kind had always come to her as freely and with as little wonder on her part as if they had been, like her youth, her bounding health, her beauty, the direct gift of heaven. She knew that the money came from her father's business, but she had never really asked herself how it was earned. It is doubtful if she could have told what his business was; it was the India trade, whatever that was, and of late years he had seemed to be more worried by it than he used to be, and she had vaguely taken this ill as an ungrateful return on the part of business. Once he had gone so far as to tell her that he had been hurt by the Great Fire somewhat. But the money for all her needs and luxuries (she was not extravagant, and really did not spend much upon herself) had come as before, and

walking through the burnt district, and seeing how handsomely it had been rebuilt, she had a comforting sense that its losses had all been repaired.

"You look a little flushed and excited, my dear," said her father, in evasion of the commands laid upon him, and he touched her fair cheek. He was very fond of her beauty and of her style; in the earlier days of her young ladyhood he used to go about with her a great deal, and was angry when he thought she did not get all the notice she ought, and a little jealous when she did.

"Yes, I *am* flushed and excited, papa," she owned, throwing herself back in the low chair she had pulled up to his sofa, and beginning to pluck nervously at those little tufts of silk that roughened the cobwebby fabric of the gray summer stuff she wore. "Don't you think," she asked, lifting her downcast eyes, "that coming home and finding you in this state is enough to make me look flushed and excited?"

"Not quite," said her father quietly. "It's not a new thing."

Helen gave a sort of lamentable laugh. "I know I was humbugging, and I'm as selfish as I can be, to think more of myself even now than I do of you. But, oh, papa! I'm *so* unhappy!" She looked at him through a mist that gathered and fell in silent drops from her eyes without clearing them, so that she did not see him carry the hand she had abandoned to his heart, and check a gasp. "I suppose we all have our accounts, one way or other, and they get confused like yours. Mine with—with—a certain person had got so mixed up that there was nothing for it but just to throw them away."

"Do you mean that you have broken with him finally, Helen?" asked her father gravely.

"I don't know whether you call it *finally*," said Helen, "but I told him it was no use—not just in those words—and that he ought to forget me; and I was afraid I wasn't equal to it; and that I couldn't see my way to it clearly; and unless I could see my way clearly, I oughtn't to go on any longer. I wrote to him last week, and I thought—I thought that perhaps he wouldn't answer it; perhaps he would come over to Rye Beach—he could easily have run over from Portsmouth—to see me—about it. But he didn't,—he didn't,—he—wrote a very short letter—oh, I didn't see *how* he could write such a letter; I tried to spare *him* in every way; and yesterday he—he—s—s—sailed!" Here the storm broke, and Helen bowed herself to the sobs with which her slimmest shook, like a tall flower beaten in the wind. Then she suddenly stopped, and ran her

hand into her pocket, and pulled out her handkerchief. She wiped away her tears, and waited for her father to speak; but he lay silent, and merely regarded her pitifully. "I couldn't bear it any longer there with those geese of Merrills,—I'm sure they were as kind as could be,—and so I came home to burden and afflict you, papa. Don't you think that was like me?" She gave her lamentable laugh again, sobbed, laughed once more, dried the fresh tears with her handkerchief, which she had mechanically shaped into a rabbit, and sat plucking at her dress as before. "What do people do, papa," she asked presently, with a certain hoarseness in her voice, "when they've thrown away their accounts?"

"I never heard of their doing it, my dear," said her father.

"Well, but when they've come to the very end of everything, and there's nothing to go on with, and they might as well stop?"

"They go into bankruptcy," answered the old man, absently, as if the thought had often been in his mind before.

"Well, that's what I've gone into—bankruptcy," said Helen. "And what do they do after they've gone into bankruptcy?"

"They begin the world again with nothing, if they have the heart," replied her father.

"That's what I have to do then—begin the world again with nothing! There! my course is clear, and I hope I like it, and I hope I'm satisfied!"

With these words of self-reproach, Helen again broke down, and bowed herself over the ruin she had made of her life.

"I don't think you need despair," said her father, soothingly, yet with a sort of physical effort which escaped her self-centered grief, "Robert is such a good fellow that if you wrote to him——"

"Why, papa! Are you crazy?" shouted the young girl. "Write to him? He's off for three years, and I don't think he'd come posting back from China, if I *did* write to him. And how *could* I write to him, even if he were in the next room?"

"It wouldn't be necessary, in that case," said her father. "I'm sorry he's gone for so long," he added, rather absently.

"If he were gone for a *day*, it couldn't make any difference," cried Helen, inexorably. "I argued it all out—and it's a perfect chain of logic—before I wrote to him. I looked at it in this way. I said to myself that it was no use having the affair off and on, any longer. It would be perfect misery to a person of my temperament to be an officer's wife, and have my husband with me to-day and at the ends of the earth to-morrow. Besides his pay

wouldn't support us. You told me that yourself, papa."

"Yes," said Mr. Harkness. "But I thought Robert might leave the navy, and——"

"I never would have let him!" Helen burst in. "He would have been as unhappy as a fish out of water, and I wouldn't have his wretchedness on my conscience, and his idleness—you know how long that splendid Captain Seymour was trying to get into business in Boston, after he left the service: and then he had to go to California before he could find anything to do; and do you suppose I was going to have Robert mooning round in that way, for ages?"

"He might have gone into business with me for the time being," said Mr. Harkness, not very hopefully.

"Oh, yes! you could have *made* a place for him, I know! And we should both have been a burden to you, then. But I shouldn't have cared for all that. I would have met any fate with Robert, if I had believed that I felt toward him just as I should. But, don't you see, papa? If I had felt toward him in that way, I never should have thought of any—any—prudential considerations. That was what convinced me, that was what I couldn't escape from, turn which way I would. That was the point I put to Robert himself, and—and—oh, I don't see how he could answer as he did! I *don't* see how he could!" Helen convulsively clutched something in the hand which she had thrust into her pocket. "It isn't that I care for myself; but oh, I am so sorry for him, away off there all alone, feeling so hard and bitter toward me, and thinking me heartless, and I don't know what all,—and hating me so."

"What did he say, Helen?" asked her father, tenderly. She snatched her hand from her pocket and laid a paper, crumpled, be-wet, distained, in the hand he stretched toward her, and then bowed her face upon her knees.

Helen and her father were old confidants, and she had not more reluctance in showing him this letter than most girls would have had in trusting such a paper to their mother's eyes. Her own mother had died long ago, and in the comradeship of her young life her father had entered upon a second youth, happier, or at least tranquil, than the first. She adored him and petted him, as a wife could not, and this worship did not spoil him as it might if it had been a conjugal devotion. They had always a perfect understanding; she had not withdrawn her childish intimacy of thought and feeling from him to give it to her mother, as she would have done if her mother had lived; he knew all her small

heart-affairs without asking, more or less in a tacit way; and she had an abidingly grateful sense of his wisdom in keeping her from follies which she could see she had escaped through it. He had never before so directly sought to know her trouble; but he had never before seen her in so much trouble; besides, he had always been Robert Fenton's friend at court with Helen; and he had quietly kept his hopes of their future through rather a stormy and uncertain present.

He liked Robert for the sake of Robert's father, who had been captain and supercargo of one of Harkness and Co's ships, and had gone down in her on her home voyage, when he was returning to be junior partner in the house, after a prosperous venture of his own in Wenham ice. He left this boy, and a young wife who died soon afterwards. Then Mr. Harkness, who was the boy's guardian, gave him and the small property that remained to him more than a guardian's care. He sent him to school, but he made him at home in his own house on all holidays and in vacation. These sojourns and absences, beginning when Robert was ten years old, and continuing through his school-boy age, had renewed alternately his intimacy and strangeness with Helen, and kept her a mystery and enchantment which grew with his growth, while to her consciousness he was simply Robert, a nice boy, who was now at school or now at home, and who was often so shy that it was perfectly silly. When he was old enough to be placed in some career he was allowed to choose Harvard, and a profession afterwards, or any more technical training that he liked better. He chose neither: the sea called him, as the old superstition is, and every nerve in his body responded. He would have liked to go into the trade in which his father had died, but here his guardian overruled him. He knew that the India trade was dying out. If Robert's soul was set upon the sea, of which there seemed no doubt, it was better that he should go into the navy; at Annapolis he would have a thorough schooling, which would stand him in good stead if future chance or choice ever cast him ashore to live.

Helen was in the sophomore year of the class with which she was dancing through Harvard when Robert came home from his first cruise. She was then a very great lady, and she patronized the midshipman with killing kindness as a younger brother, though he was in fact half a year her senior. He now fell in love with her outright: very proud love, very jealous, very impatient. She could not understand it. She said to her father it was so queer.

She never thought of such a thing. Why, Robert! It was absurd. Besides, he had such a funny name: *Fenton*! But a passion like his was not to be quenched with reasons even so good as these. He went to sea again, bitterly, rapturously brooding over her idea, and came home in the autumn after Helen's class-day. All the fellows had scattered now; and she was left much younger and humbler in her feelings, and not so great a lady for all her triumphs. Two of her class had proposed to her, and lots had come near it; but her heart had been left untouched, and she perceived, or thought she perceived, that these young gentlemen, who were wise and mature enough for their age, though neither Solomons nor Methuselahs, were all silly boys. In herself, on the contrary, the tumult of feeling with which she had first entered the world had been succeeded by a calm, which she might well have mistaken for wisdom. She felt that she now knew the world thoroughly, and while she was resolved to judge it kindly, she was not going to be dazzled by it any longer. She had become an observer of human nature; she analyzed her feelings; sometimes she made cutting remarks to people, and was dreadfully sorry for it. She withdrew a great deal from society, and liked being thought odd. She had begun to take lessons in painting with a number of ladies, under an artist's criticism; she took up courses of reading; she felt that life was a serious affair. On his return, Robert at first seemed to her more boyish, more brotherly than before. But in talking with him certain facts of his history came out that showed him a very brave and manly fellow, and good, too. This gave her pause; so keen an observer of human nature at once discerned in this young man,—who did not brag of his experiences, nor yet affect to despise them as trifles, but honestly owned that at one time he was scared, and that at another he would have given everything to be ashore,—an object worthy of her closest and most reverent study. She proceeded to idealize him, and to stand in awe of him. Oh, *yes*! with a deep sighing breath, and a long dreamy look at him—*he*! What *he* had been through, must have changed the whole world to him. After that night in the *typhoon*—*well*, nothing could ever have been the same to *her* after that. He must find all the interests at home sickeningly mean. This was the tone she took with him, driving him to despair. When he again urged his suit, she said that she could not see why he should care for her. At the same time she wanted to ask him why he did not wear his uniform ashore, instead of that unnatural civil dress that he seemed so anxious to make himself ridiculous in. Being pressed

for some sort of answer, she said that she had resolved never to marry. After this Robert went off very melancholy upon his third cruise. But she wrote him such kind and sympathetic letters that he came home from this cruise, which was a short one, more fondly in love than ever, but more patiently, more pleasingly in love; and he now behaved so sensibly, with so much apparent consideration for her uncertainty of mind, that she began to think seriously of him. But though she liked him ever so much, and respected him beyond anything, the very fact that she was wondering whether she could ask him to leave the navy or not, and where and how they should live, seemed sufficient proof to her that she did not care for him in the right way. Love, she knew, did not consider ways and means; it did not stop to argue; it found in itself its own reason and the assurance of a future. It did not come after years of shilly-shallying, and beating about the bush, and weighing this and that, and scrutiny of one's emotions. If she loved Robert so little as to care what happened after they were married, she did not love him at all. Something like this, but expressed with infinite kindness, was what she had written from Rye Beach to Robert stationed at Portsmouth. She ended by leaving the case in his hands. She forbade him to hope, but she told him there *had* been a time, a moment, when she thought that she might have loved him.

Robert took all this away. He did not deign to ask her when this mysterious moment was, far less whether it might ever recur; he did not answer one of her arguments; he did not even come over to Rye Beach to combat and trample on her reasons. He wrote her a furious, foolish reply, in which he agreed with her that she had never loved him, and never would, and he bade her farewell. He managed to exchange with a friend who was bemoaning his hard lot in being ordered away from his young wife to the China station, and he sailed with their blessing three days after getting Helen's letter. She only learned of his departure by chance.

The old man held the letter in his hand, after reading it, for so long a time, that at last Helen looked up. "It seems to me you take it pretty coolly, papa," she said, her lips quivering.

"Yes, yes. Poor Robert! Poor boy!" sighed her father. Then, while she bridled indignantly at his misplaced compassion, he added, "I'm sorry, Helen. I think you would have come to like him. Well, well! If you are contented, my dear——"

"How can you *say* such a thing, papa?" cried Helen, astonished that he should have

taken what she understood of her letter just as Robert had done, "when you know,—when you know I——" but Helen could not finish what she was going to say. She could not own that she thought her letter susceptible of quite a different answer. She set her lips and tried to stop their trembling, while her eyes filled.

Her father did not notice. "My dear," he said presently, "will you ask Margaret to make me a cup of tea? I feel unpleasantly weak."

"Why, papa!" cried Helen, flying to the bell, "why didn't you tell me before, instead of letting me worry you with all this foolishness? Why didn't you *say* you were not so well?"

"I wasn't thinking of it," said her father, meekly accepting her reproof. "It's nothing. The wind has changed, hasn't it. I feel the east a little."

"You're *chilly*?" Helen was now tempted to be really harsh with him for his remissness, but she did not stay from running after the wrap, soft and light, which she had brought back from the sea-side with her, and had thrown down with her bag in the hall, and though she bemoaned his thoughtlessness, as she flung it over him, still she did not pour out upon him all the self-reproach in her heart. She went and hurried Margaret with the tea, and then set an old-fashioned tea-pot beside the sofa, and when the tea came, she drew up her chair, and poured it for him. She offered to pull down the window, but he made her a sign to let it be; and, in fact, it was not cooler without than within, and no chill came from the little yard, on whose lofty walls the sunset was beginning to burn in tender, red light. She poured herself a cup of tea when she came back, and when she had made her father repeat again and again that he felt much better, she began to see the absurdity of being tragic about Robert at this late day, when she had so often refused him before without the least tragedy. This, to be sure, was not quite like the other refusals; not so one-sided; but really, except for Robert's own sake, what had she to be sorry for, and why should she pity his towering dudgeon? An ache, faint and dull, made itself felt deep in her heart, and she answered sadly, "Well," to her father's tentative "Helen."

He did not go on, and she asked presently, "What is it, papa?"

"Oh, nothing. There was something I was going to speak to you about. But it will do another time." Helen recollected that once or twice before this her father had begun in the same way, and had postponed whatever he

been going to say to the same fashion. It was not a thing to be curious about, and she had never pressed him to speak. She knew that he would speak when he really thought best. But she wondered now a little if his mind was still running upon Robert.

"Was it something in regard to—to—me, papa!"

"Why, yes. Yes, indirectly."

"Well, then, don't think of it any more. I shall not. I'm sorry I worried you about it."

"About what, my dear?" asked her father, who could not have followed her.

"Robert!" said Helen abruptly.

"Oh! I wasn't thinking about Robert."

"Because, if you were, papa, I want to tell you that I am quite reconciled to have everything end as it has done. Robert and I will always be good friends. You needn't be troubled about that."

"Oh, yes, certainly," assented her father, closing his eyes.

Helen sat looking at him, as if she would like to go on. But she was a little ashamed, and a little piqued that her father should shut his eyes in that way while she was talking of Robert. He had taken the whole affair rather oddly. She had been prepared to defend Robert if her father were angry with him, as she expected; but, instead of being angry, he had really seemed to side with Robert, and had somehow, by his reticence, implied that he would have been glad to have her humble herself to Robert.

"If you wish to sleep, papa," she said, with a dignity wasted upon him, for he still lay with his eyes closed, "I will go away."

"I'm drowsy," said her father. "But don't go, Helen. Sit down here."

He made a motion for her to sit beside him, and after an instant's further resentment she drew up her chair and laid her beautiful head down upon the cushion by his. She gave him a kiss, and dropped a large tear against his withered cheek and wiped it away with her handkerchief; and then she hid her face again, and wept peacefully till all her tears were gone. At last she lifted her face and dried her eyes, and sat dreamily watching the red sunset light creeping up the wall on which the wistaria clambered. It rose slowly, leaf by leaf, till it lit an airy frond at top that swayed in it like a pennon. Suddenly it leaped from this and left it dark, and a shiver coursed through the next rank of foliage. It somehow made her think of a ship going down below the horizon, and the waves running along the sky where the streamers had just hung. But Robert must have been out of sight of land for two days and more before that.

HELEN sat beside her father, while the solitude of the house deepened from silence to silence. Then Margaret came to the door and looked in as if to ask whether it was not time for her to fetch away the tea-things. Helen gave her a nod of acquiescence and presently rose and followed her out to the kitchen to tell her that she was going to her own room, and to say that she must be called when her father woke. But in the kitchen Margaret's company was a temptation to her loneliness, and she made one little pretext after another for remaining, till Margaret set her a chair in the door-way. Margaret had been in the house ever since Helen was born, and Helen still used the same freedom with her that she had in childhood, and gave herself the range of places to which young ladyhood ordinarily drives its radiant presence. She had, indeed, as much intimacy with the cook as could consist with their different ages, and she got on smoothly with the cook's temper, which had not been so good as her looks in youth, and had improved quite as little with age. Margaret was of a remote sort of Irish birth; but her native land had scarcely marked her accent, and, but for her church and her sense of place, which was sometimes very respectful and sometimes very high and mighty with those above her, she might have been mistaken for an American. She had a low voice, which only grew lower as she grew angry. A family in which she could do all the work had been her ideal when she first came to Boston, but she had failed of this now for some thirty years, and there seemed little hope that the chances would still turn in her favor. In Helen's childhood, when she used to ask Margaret, in moments of tenderness following the gift of dough in unexpected quantity, whether she would come and live with her after she got married, Margaret had always answered: "Yes, if you wont have any one else bothering round," which was commonly too much for the just pride of the actual second-girl. She had been cook in the family so long ago as when Mr. Harkness had kept a man; she had pressed upon the retreat of the last man with a broom in her hand and a joyful sarcasm on her lips; and she would willingly have kept vacant the place that she had made too hot for a long succession of second-girls. In the intervals of their going and coming, she realized her ideal of domestic service for the time being; and in the summer, when Helen was away a good deal, she prolonged these intervals to the utmost. She was necessarily much more the housekeeper than Helen,

though they both respected a fiction of contrary effect, and Helen commonly left her the choice of her helpers. She had not been surprised to find Margaret alone in the house, but she thought it well to ask her how she was getting on without anybody.

"Oh, very well, Miss Helen! You know your father don't make any trouble."

"Well, I've come now, and we must get somebody," said Helen.

"Why, I thought you was going back on Monday, Miss Helen," answered Margaret.

"No, I shall not leave papa. I think he's not at all well."

"He does seem rather poorly, Miss Helen. But I don't see why you need any one, in the summer, this way."

"Who's to go to the door?" asked Helen. "Besides, you couldn't take care of both of us, Margaret?"

"Just as you say, Miss Helen; I'd just as live," answered Margaret, stubbornly. "It isn't for me to say; but I don't see what you want with anybody; you won't see a soul."

"Oh, you never can tell, Margaret. You've had a good rest now, and you must have somebody to help you." Helen's sadness smiled at this confusion of ideas, and its suitability to Margaret's peculiar attitude. "Get somebody that you know, Margaret, and that you'll like. But we must have somebody." She regarded Margaret's silent and stiff displeasure with a moment's amusement, and then her bright face clouded, and she asked softly: "Did you know, Margaret, that Robert—that Lieutenant Fenton—had sailed again?"

"Why, no, Miss Helen! You don't mean that? Why, I thought he was going to stay the summer at Portsmouth."

"He was," said Helen, in the same low voice, "but he changed his mind, it seems."

"Sailors are a roving set, anyway," Margaret generalized. Then she added: "Did he come down to say good-bye to your father?"

"Why, no," sadly answered Helen, who now thought of this for the first time. Her heart throbbed indignantly; then she reflected that she had kept him from coming. She looked up at the evening blue, with the swallows weaving a woof of flight across the top of the space framed in by the high walls on every hand, and "He hadn't time, I suppose," she said sadly. "He couldn't get off."

"Well, I don't call it very nice, his not coming," persisted Margaret. "I'd 'a' deserted first." Her associations with naval service had been through gallant fellows who were not in a position to resign.

Helen smiled so ruefully at this that she

would better for cheerfulness have wept. But she recognized Margaret's limitations as a confidant, and said no more. She rose presently, and again asked Margaret to look in pretty soon, and see if her father were awake, and call her, if he were; she was going to her room. She looked in a moment herself as she went, and listened till she heard him breathing, and so passed on through the drawing-room, and trailed heavily upstairs.

The house was rather old-fashioned, and it was not furnished in the latest taste, but it made the appeal with which things out of date, or passing out of date, touch the heart. It was, in fact, beginning to be respectable, because it was no longer in the contest for effect, which the decorations of the newer houses carried on about it, and there was a sort of ugly keeping throughout.

In the very earliest days of Mr. Harkness's house-keeping, the ornamentation of his home had reflected the character of his business somewhat. There had been even a time when the young super-cargo brought back—it was his first voyage—quaint and beautiful shells from the East, for his wife to set about the tables and mantels; but these objects, so exquisite in themselves, so unyielding in composition, had long since disappeared. Some grotesque bronzes, picked up in Chinese ports, to which his early ventures had taken him, survived the expulsion of ivory carvings and Indian idols and *genre* statuettes in *terra cotta* (like those you see in the East Indian Museum at Salem), and now found themselves, with the new feeling for Oriental art, in the very latest taste. The others were bestowed in neglected drawers and shelves, along with boxes containing a wealth of ghastly rich and elaborate white crape shawls from China, and fantastically subtle cotton webs from India which Helen had always thought she should use in tableaux, and never had worn. Among the many pictures on the walls (there were too many), there were three Stuarts; the rest were of very indifferent merit,—large figure paintings or allegorical landscapes, after the taste of Cole and Poussin, in great carved and scrollwork frames. Helen had once thought of making a raid upon these enemies of art, and, in fact, she had contemplated remodeling the whole equipment of the parlors, in conformity to the recent feeling in such matters; but she had not got further than the incomplete representation of some golden-rod and mullein-stalks upon the panels of her own chamber-door; and now that the fervor of her first enthusiasm had burnt itself out, she was not sorry she had left the old house in peace.

"Oh, I should think you'd be so rejoiced," said the chief of her friends; "it's such a comfort to go into *one* house where you don't have to admire the artistic sentiment, and where every wretched little æsthetic prig of a table or a chair isn't asserting a principle or teaching a lesson. Don't touch a cobweb, Helen!" It had never even come to a talk between her and her father, and the house remained unmolested—the home of her childhood. She had not really cared much for it since she was a child. The sense of our impermanent relation to the parental roof comes to us very early in life; and, perhaps, more keenly to a young girl than to her brothers. They are of the world, by all the conditions of their active, positive being, almost from the first,—a great world that is made for them,—but she has her world to create. She cannot sit and adorn her father's house, as she shall one day beautify and worship her husband's; she can indeed do her duty by it, but the restless longing remains, and her housewifeliness does not voluntarily blossom out beyond the precincts of her own chamber, which she makes her realm of fancy and of dreams. She could not be the heart of the house if she would, as her mother is, or has been; and though, in her mother's place, she can be housekeeper, thrifty, wise, and notable, still some mysterious essential is wanting which it is not in her nature to supply to her father's house.

Helen went to her own room, and flinging up the windows, let in the noises of the streets. A few feet went by in the secluded place, and a sound of more frequent trampling came from the street into which it opened. Further off rose the blurred tumult of business, softened by the stretch of the Common, and growing less and less with the lapse of the long summer day. It was already a little cooler, and the smell of the sprinkled street stole refreshingly in at the window. It was still very light, and when Helen opened her blinds, the room brightened cheerfully all about her, and the sympathetic intimacy of her own closest belongings tenderly appealed to her. After something has happened, and we first see familiar things about us as they were, there comes, just before the sense of difference in ourselves returns to torment us, a moment of blind and foolish oblivion, and this was Helen's as she sat down beside the window, and looked round upon the friendly prettiness of her room. It had been her room when she was a child, and there were childish keepsakes scattered about in odd places, out of the way of youngladyish luxuries, high-shouldered bottles of perfume, and long-handled ivory brushes, and dainty boxes and cases,

and starred and beveled hand-glasses, and other sacred mysteries of toilet. Of the period when she had thought herself wedded to art, there were certain charcoal sketches pinned against the wall, and in one corner, not very definite at first glance under the draperies tossed upon it from time to time, was her easel. On projections of her mirror-frame hung souvenirs of Robert's first cruise, which had been in the Mediterranean; ropes of Roman pearls; nets and bracelets and necklaces of shells and beads from Venice; filigree silver jewelry from Genoa; strands and rosaries of black, barbarically scented wooden beads from the Levant,—not things you could wear at all, but very pleasant to have; they gave a sentiment to your room when you brought any one into it; they were nice to have lying about, and people liked to take them into their hands; they were not so very uncommon, either, that you had to keep telling what they were. She had never thought that, possibly, Robert had expected her to wear the absurd things. With an aching recurrence to their quarrel (it could be called no less) and a penitent self-pity, she thought of it now. It did not seem to her that she could touch them, but she went languidly to the mirror and took some of them down, and then all at once fantastically began to array herself in them; like a mad girl, she reflected. She threw the loops of Roman pearls and the black strands of Levantine beads about her neck; she set a net of the Venetian shell-work on her hair, and decked her wrists and her lovely ears with the Genoese filigree; a perfectly frantic combination, she mused, as she shook her head a little to make the ear-bobs dance. "Yes, perfectly frantic," she said aloud, but not much thinking of the image confronting her from the mirror, thinking rather of Robert, and poignantly regretting that she had never put them on for him; and thinking that if the loss of him had made her certain about him too late for ever, how fatally strange that would be. Again she went over all the facts of the affair, and was able to make much surer of Robert's motives than of her own. She knew that if he had understood her saying that she might have loved him once to be any encouragement for the future, he would not have written as he did. She could imagine Robert's being very angry at the patronizing tone of the rest of her letter; she had entire faith in his stupidity; she never doubted his generosity, his magnanimous incapability of turning her refusal of him into a refusal of her; his was not the little soul that could rejoice in such a chance. She wondered if now, far out at sea, sailing, sailing away, three years away, from her, he

saw anything in her letter but refusal; or was he still in that blind rage? Did he never once think that it had seemed such a great thing for her to make confession, which meant him to come to her? But had she really meant that? It seemed so now, but perhaps then she had only thought of mingling a drop of kindness in his bitter cup, of trying to spare him the mortification of having loved a person who had never thought for a moment of loving him? From time to time, her image appeared to advance upon her from the depths of the mirror, decked in all that incongruous frippery, and to say with trembling lips, "Perfectly frantic, perfectly frantic," while the tears ran down its face; and she found a wild comfort in regarding herself as quite an insane, irresponsible creature, who did not know what she was about. She felt that fate ought not to hold her to account. The door-bell rang, and she snatched the net from her hair with a fearful shudder, and flung down all the ornaments in a heap upon her dressing-table. Bumping sounds in the hall below reminded her that in her trance before the glass she had remotely known of a wagon stopping at the door, and presently she heard Margaret coming up the stairs behind the panting expressman who was fetching up her trunk. She fled into another room, and guiltily lurked there till they went out again, before she returned to unlock and unpack the box. It was one of Helen's economies not to drive home from the station, but to send her baggage by express and come up in a horse-car. The sums thus saved she devoted to a particular charity, and was very rigid with herself about spending every half-dollar coach-fare for that object. She only gave twenty-five cents to the express, and she made a merit of the fact that neither the coach-hire nor the charity ever cost her father anything. Robert had once tried to prove that it always cost him seventy-five cents, but she had easily seen through the joke, and had made him confess it.

She was still busy unpacking when Margaret came up to say that her father was awake now, and then she left off at once to go to him. The gas had been lighted in the hall and library, and that made life another thing. Her father was in his arm-chair, and was feeling decidedly better, he said; he had told Margaret to have tea there in the library. Helen laughed at him for having two teas within two hours; he owned to being hungry, and that reminded her that she had eaten nothing since an early dinner. When the tea and toast came in, and the cloth was laid half across the round table, in the mellow

light of the study lamp, they were very cozy. Helen, who was always thinking of Robert, whatever else she thought of, began to play in fancy at a long life of devotion to her father, in which she should never marry. She had always imagined him living with her, but now she was living with him, and they were to grow old together; in twenty years, when he was eighty, she would be forty-three, and then there would not be much difference between them. She now finally relinquished the very last idea of Robert, except as a brother. She did not suppose she should ever quite like his wife, but she should pet their children.

"Helen," said her father, breaking in upon these ideas, "how should you like to live in the country?"

"Why, papa, I was just thinking of it! That is, not in the country exactly, but somewhere off by ourselves, just you and I. Of course, I should like it."

"I don't mean on a farm," pursued her father, "but in some of the suburban towns, where we could have a bit of ground and breathing space. I think it grows closer and closer in town; at times it seems as if I could hardly catch my breath. I believe it would agree with me in the country. I can't get away from business entirely for a few years yet,—if the times continues so bad, I must bend all my energies to it, in fact,—and I have a fancy that the coming in and out of town would do me good. And I have a notion that I should like to build. I should like a new house—a perfectly new house. We could live on a simpler scale in the country."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Helen. "I should come into town to shop, with my initials worked in worsted on the side of my bag, and I should know where the bargains were, and lunch at Copeland's. I should like it."

"Well, we must think about it. I daresay we could let the house here without much trouble. I feel it somehow a great burden upon me, but I shouldn't like to sell it."

"Oh, no, papa! We couldn't think of selling it. I should just like to let it, and then never go near it, or look in the same direction, till we were ready to come back to it."

"I have lived here so long," continued her father, making her the listener to his musings rather than speaking to her, "that I should like a change. I used to think that I should never leave the house, but a place may become overcrowded with associations. You are too young, Helen, to understand how terrible it is to find one's own past grow into the dumb, material things about one, and become, as it were, imprisoned in them."

"Oh, yes," sighed the girl, "there are some

dress of mine that I can't bear the sight of, just because I felt or said or did certain things when I wore them."

"An old house like this," Mr. Harkness went on, "gets to be your body, and usurps all your reality, which doesn't seem to live in it either, while you move round like a ghost. The past is so much more than the present. Think how much more these walls and these old chairs and tables have known of us than we now are!"

"No, no! Don't think of it, papa, or we shall be getting into the depths again," pleaded Helen.

"Well, I won't," consented her father, coming back to himself with a smile, which presently faded. "But it all makes me restless and impatient. I should like to begin a new life somewhere else, in a new house." He was silent awhile, trifling with the toast on his plate; his appetite had passed at the sight of the food, and he had eaten scarcely anything. He looked at Helen, and then at a portrait on the wall, and then at Helen again.

"I'm not much like mamma, am I, papa?" she asked.

"Not much in face," said Mr. Harkness.

"Do you wish I was more?" she pursued timidly.

"No, I don't think I do," said her father.

"It would only make me more painful, if I looked more like her, such a helpless, selfish thing as I am," morbidly assented Helen. "I should only make you miss her the more."

"Why, Helen, you're a very good girl—the best child in the world," said her father.

"Oh, no, I'm not, papa. I'm one of the worst. I never think of anybody but myself," said Helen, who was thinking of Robert. "You don't know how many times I've gone down on my mental knees to you and asked you to have patience with me."

"Asked *me* to have patience with you?" said her father, taking her by the chin, and pressing against his cheek the beautiful face which she leaned toward him. "Poor child! There's hardly a day since you were born that I haven't done you a greater wrong than the sum of all your sins would come to. Papas are dreadful fellows, Helen; but they sometimes live in the hope of repairing their misdeeds."

"Write them on a slip of paper, and hide it in a secret drawer that opens with a clasp and spring, when you don't know they're there," said Helen, glad of his touch of playfulness. "We've both been humbugging, and we know it."

He stared at her and said, "Your voice is like your mother's; and just now, when you came in, your movement was very like hers."

I hadn't noticed it before. But she has been a great deal in my mind of late."

If he had wished to talk of her mother, whom Helen could not remember, and who had been all her life merely the shadow of a sorrow to her,—a death, a grave, a name upon a stone, a picture on the wall,—she would not spare herself the duty of encouraging him to do so. "Was she tall, like me?" she asked.

"Not so tall," answered her father. "And she was dark."

"Yes," said Helen, lifting her eyes to the picture on the wall.

"She had a great passion for the country," continued Mr. Harkness, "and I liked the town. It was more convenient for me, and I was born in Boston. It has often grieved me to think that I didn't yield to her. I must have been dreaming of her, for when I woke a little while ago, this regret was like a physical pang at my heart. As long as we live, we can't help treating each other as if we were to live always. But it's a mistake. I never refused to go into the country with her," he said, as if to appease this old regret. "I merely postponed it. Now I should like to go."

He rose from the table, and taking the study-lamp in his hand, he feebly pushed apart the sliding-doors that opened into the drawing-room. He moved slowly down its length, on one side, throwing the light upon this object and that, before which he faltered, and so returned on the other side, as if to familiarize himself with every detail. Sometimes he held the lamp above, and sometimes below his face, but always throwing its age and weariness into relief. Helen had remained watching him. As he came back she heard him say less to her, as it seemed, than to himself, "Yes, I should like to sell it. I'm tired of it."

He set the lamp down upon the table again, and sank into his chair, and lapsed into a reverie which left Helen solitary beside him. "Ah," she realized, as she looked on his musing, absent face, "he is old and I am young, and he has more to love in the other world, with my mother and both my brothers there, than he has in this. O Robert, Robert, Robert!"

But, perhaps, his absent mind was not so much bent upon the lost as she thought. He had that way fathers have of treating his daughter as an equal, of talking to her gravely and earnestly, and then of suddenly dropping her into complete nothingness, as if she were a child to be amused for a while, and then set down from his knee and sent out-of-doors. Helen dutifully accepted this condition of their companionship; she cared for it so little as never to have formulated it

to herself; when she was set down she went out, and ordinarily she did not think of it.

A peremptory ring at the door started them both, and when Margaret had opened it there entered, all at the same instant, a loud, kindly voice, the chirp of boots, heavily trodden upon by a generous bulk, that rocked from side to side in its advance, and a fragrance of admirable cigars, that active and passive perfume which comes from smoking and being smoked in the best company. "At home, Margaret?" asked the voice, whose loudness was a husky loudness, in a pause of the boots. "Yes? Well, don't put me in there, Margaret," which was apparently in rejection of the drawing-room. "I'll join them in the library."

The boots came chirping down the hall in that direction, with a sound of heavy breathing. Helen sprang from her chair, and fled to meet the cheerful sound; there was the noise of an encountering kiss, and a jolly laugh, and "Well, Helen!" and "Oh, Captain Butler!" and later, "Harkness!" and "Butler!" as Helen led the visitor in.

"Well!" said this guest, for the third time. He straightened his tall mass to its full height, and looked out over his chest with eyes of tender regard upon Harkness's thin and refined face, now lit up after the handshaking with cordial welcome. "Do you know," he said, as if somehow it were a curious fact of natural history, "that you have it uncommonly close in here?" He went over to the window that opened upon the little grassy yard and put it up for himself, while Harkness was explaining that it had been put down while he was napping. Then he planted himself in a large leathern chair beside it, and went on smoking the cigar on the end of which he had been chewing. He started from the chair with violence, coughing and gesturing to forbid Helen, who was hospitably whispering to Margaret. "No, no; don't do it. I won't have anything. I couldn't. I've just dined at the club. Yes, you may do that much," he added to Helen, as she set a little table, with an ash-holder, at his elbow. "You've no idea what a night it is. It's cooler, and the air's delicious. I say, I want to take Helen back with me. I wish she'd go alone, and leave us two old fellows together here. There's no place like Boston in the summer, after all. But you haven't told me whether you're surprised to see me." Captain Butler looked round at them with something of the difficulty of a sea-turtle in a lateral inspection.

"Never surprised, but always charmed," said Helen, with just the shade of mockery in her tone which she knew suited this visitor.

"Charmed, eh?" asked Captain Butler. Apparently he meant to say something satirical about the word, but could not think of anything. He turned again to her father: "How are you, Harkness?"

"Oh, I'm very well," said Harkness evasively. "I'm as well as usual."

"Then you have yourself fetched home in a hack by a policeman every day, do you!" remarked Captain Butler, blowing a succession of white rings into the air. "You were seen from the club window. I'll tell you what: you're sticking to it too close."

"Oh, yes, Captain Butler, *do* get him away," sighed Helen, while her father, who had not sat down, began to walk back and forth in an irritated, restless way.

"For the present I can't leave it," said Harkness, fretfully. He added more graciously: "Perhaps in a week or two, or next month, I can get off for a few days. You know I was one of the securities for Bates and Mather," he said, looking at Captain Butler over Helen's head.

"I had forgotten that," answered Captain Butler, gravely.

"They left things in a complete tangle. I can't tell just where I am yet, and, of course, I've no peace till I know."

"Of course," assented Captain Butler. "I won't vex you with retroactive advice, Joshua," he added affectionately; "but I hope you won't do anything of that kind again."

"No, Jack, I won't. But you know, under the circumstances, it would have been black ingratitude to refuse."

"Yes," said Captain Butler. He smoked awhile in silence. Then he said, "I suppose it's no worse with the old trade than with everything else, at present."

"No, we're all in the same boat, I believe," said Harkness.

"How is Marian?" asked Helen, a little restive under the cross firing.

"Oh, Marian's all right. But if she were not, she wouldn't know it."

"I suppose she's very *much* engaged," said Helen, with a faint pang of something like envy.

"Yes," said Captain Butler. "I thought you were at Rye Beach, young lady."

"I thought you were at Beverly, old gentleman," retorted Helen; she had been saucy to Captain Butler from infancy.

"So I was; but I came up unexpectedly to-day."

"So did I."

"Did you? Good! Now I'll tell you why I came, and you shall tell me why *you* did. I came because I got to thinking of your father,

and had a fancy I should like to see him. Did you?"

Helen hung her head.

"No," she said at length.

The captain laughed.

"Whom had you a fancy to see here, then, at this time of year?"

"Oh, I didn't say I should tell. You made that bargain all yourself," mocked Helen. "But it was very kind of you to come on papa's account," she added softly.

"What are you making there?" asked the captain, bending forward to look at the work Helen had taken into her lap.

"Who—I?" she asked, as if she had perhaps been asked what Robert was making. Her mind had been running upon him since Captain Butler asked her why she had come up to Boston. "Oh!" she recovered herself. "Why, this," she said, taking the skeleton frame-work of gauze and wire on her fingertips, and holding it at arm's length, with her head aslant, surveying it, "this is a bonnet for Margaret."

"A bonnet, hey?" said the captain. "It looks like a Shaker cap."

"Yes?" Helen clapped it on her head, and looked jauntily at the captain, dropping her shoulders, and putting her chin out. "Now, does it?"

"No, not now. The Shaker sisters don't wear crimps, and they don't smile in that wicked way." Helen laughed, and took the bonnet-frame off. "So you make Margaret's bonnets, do you? Do you make your own?"

"Sometimes. Not often. But I like millinery. It's what I should turn to if I were left to take care of myself."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't find it such fun," said the captain.

"Oh, milliners make lots of money," returned Helen. "They must. Why, when this bonnet is done, you couldn't get it for ten dollars. Well, the materials don't cost three."

"I wish my girls had your head for business," said the captain, honestly. Helen made him a burlesque obeisance. "Yes, I mean it," he insisted. "You know that I always admired your good sense. I'm always talking it into Marian."

"Better not," said Helen, with a pin between her teeth.

"Why?"

"Because I haven't got it, and it'd make her hate me if I had."

"Do you mean to tell me that you're not a sensible girl?" inquired the captain.

Helen nodded, and made "yes" with her lips, as well as she could with the pin between her teeth. She took it out to say, "You should have seen my performances in my room a

little while ago." She was thinking of that rehearsal before the mirror.

"What were they?" asked the captain.

"Oh, as if I should tell!"

Helen bowed herself over the bonnet, and blushed and laughed. Her father liked to hear the banter between her and his old friend. They both treated her as if she were a child, and she knew it and liked it; she behaved like a child.

"Harkness," said the captain, turning his fat head half round toward his friend, who sat a little back of him, and breaking off his cigar-ash into the bronze plate at his elbow, "do you know that your remaining in the trade after all the rest of us have gone out of it is something quite monumental?"

Captain Butler had a tender and almost reverential love for Joshua Harkness, but he could not help using a little patronage toward him, since his health had grown delicate and his features had not distinctly prospered.

"I am glad you like it, Jack," said Harkness quietly.

"The captain is a mass of compliments tonight," remarked Helen.

The captain grinned his consciousness. "You are a minx," he said admiringly to Helen. Then he threw back his head and pulled at his cigar, uttering between puffs, "No, but I mean it, Harkness. There's something uncommonly fine about it. A man gets to be *noblesse* by sticking to any old order of things. It makes one think of the *ancien régime* somehow to look at you. Why, you're still of the oldest tradition of commerce, the stately and gorgeous traffic of the Orient; you're what Samarcand and Venice and Genoa and Lisbon and London and Salem have come to."

"They've come to very little in the end, then," said Harkness as before.

"Oh, I don't know about that;" the captain took the end of his cigar out and lit a fresh one from it before he laid it down upon the ash-holder; "I don't know about that. We don't consider material things merely. There has always been something romantic—something heroic about the old trade. To be sure, now that it's got down to telegraphing, it's only fit for New Yorkers. They're quite welcome to it." This was not very logical, taken as a whole, but we cannot always be talking reason. At the words romantic and heroic Helen had pricked her ears, if that phrase may be used concerning ears of such loveliness as hers, and she paused from her millinery. "Aha, young lady," cried the captain, "you're listening, are you? You didn't know there was any romance or heroism in business, did you?"

"What business?" asked Helen.

"Your father's business, young woman; my old business, the India trade."

"The India trade? Why, were you ever in the India trade, Captain Butler?"

"Was I ever in the India trade?" demanded the captain, taking his cigar out of his mouth in order to frown with more effect upon Helen. "Well, upon my word! Where did you think I got my title? I'm too old to have been in the war."

"I didn't know," said Helen.

"I got it in the India trade. I was captain and super-cargo many an eleven months' voyage, just as your father was."

Helen was vastly amused at this.

"Why, papa! were you ever captain of a ship?"

"For a time," said Mr. Harkness, smiling at the absurdity.

"Of course he was!" shouted the captain.

"Then why isn't he captain now?"

"Because there's a sort of captain that loses his handle when he comes ashore, and there's a sort that keeps it. I'm one sort and your father's the other. It's natural to call a person of my model and complexion by some kind of title, and it isn't natural to call such a man as your father so. Besides, I was captain longer than he was. I was in the India trade, young lady, and out of it before you were born."

"I was born a great while ago," observed Helen, warningly.

"I daresay you think so," said the captain.

"I thought I was, at your age. But you'll find, as you grow older, that you weren't born such a very great while ago after all. The time shortens up. Isn't that so, Harkness?"

"Yes," said Mr. Harkness. "Everything happened day before yesterday."

"Exactly," said the captain. Helen thought how young she must be to have already got that letter of Robert's so many centuries ago. "Yes," the captain pursued. "I had been in the India trade twenty-five years when I went out of it in 1857—or it went out of me." He nodded his great, close-clipped head in answer to her asking glance. "It went out of a good many people at that time. We had a grand smash. We had overdone it. We had warnings enough, but we couldn't realize that our world was coming to an end. It hadn't got so low as telegraphing, yet; but it was mere shop then, even, compared with the picturesque traffic of our young days. Eh, Harkness?"

"Yes, it had lost all attraction but profit."

"Were you ever down at India Wharf, Helen?" demanded the captain. "I don't blame you; neither were my girls. But were you?"

"Of course," said Helen, scorning to lift her eyes from her work. "The Nahant boat starts from it."

"The Nahant boat!" repeated the captain in a great rage. "In my day there was no Nahant boat about India Wharf, I can tell you, nor any other steamboat; nor any dirty shanties ashore. The place was sacred to the shipping of the grandest commerce in the world. There they lay, those beautiful ships, clean as silver, every one of them, and manned by honest Yankee crews." The captain got upon his feet for the greater convenience of his eloquence. "Not by ruffians from every quarter of the globe. There were gentlemen's sons before the mast, with their share in the venture, going out for the excitement of the thing; boys from Harvard, fellows of education and spirit; and the forecabin was filled with good Toms and Jims and Joes from the Cape; chaps whose aunts you knew; good stock through and through, sound to the core. The super-cargo was often his own captain, and he was often a Harvard man—you know what *they* are!"

"Nicest fellows in the world," consented Helen.

The captain blew a shaft of white smoke into the air, and then cut it through with a stroke of his cigar.

"We had on a mixed cargo, and we might be going to trade at eastern ports on the way out. Nobody knew what market we should find in Calcutta. It was pure adventure, and a calculation of chances, and it was a great school of character. It was a trade that made men as well as fortunes; it took thought and forethought. The owners planned their ventures like generals planning a campaign. They were not going to see us again for a year; they were not going to hear of us till we were signaled outside on our return. When we sailed it was an event, a ceremony, a solemnity; and we celebrated it with song from all the tarry throats on board. Yes, the men used to sing as we dropped down the bay."

"Oh, Captain Butler, it *was* fine!" cried Helen, dropping her hands on her work, and looking up at the captain in his smoke cloud, with rapture. "Papa, why didn't you ever let me come down to see your ships sail?"

"It was all changed before you were born, Helen," began her father.

"Oh, yes, all changed," cried the captain, taking the word away from him. "The ships had begun, long before that, to stop at East Boston, and we sold their cargoes by sample, instead of handling them in our warehouses, and getting to feel some sort of human interest in them. When it came to that, a mere

shopman's speculation, I didn't much care for the New Yorkers' getting it."

The captain sat down and smoked in silence.

"How did the New Yorkers get it?" asked Helen, with some indignant stir in her local pride.

"In the natural course of things," said her father. "Just as we got it from Salem. By being bigger and richer."

"Oh, it was all changed anyway," broke in the captain. "We used to import nearly all the cotton goods used in this country,—fabrics that the natives wove on their little looms at home, and that had the sentiment you girls pretend to find in hand-made things,—but before we stopped, we got to sending our own cottons to India. And then came the telegraph, and put the finishing stroke to romance in the trade. Your father loads now, according to the latest dispatches from Calcutta. He knows just what his cargo will be worth when it gets there, and he telegraphs his people what to send back." The captain ended in a minor key. "I'm glad I went out of it when I did. You'd have done well to go out too, Harkness."

"I don't know, Jack. I had nothing else in view. You know I had become involved before the crash came, and I couldn't get out."

"I think you could," returned the captain, stubbornly. And he went on to show his old friend how. And the talk wandered back to the great days of the old trade, and to the merchants, the super-cargoes, the captains, the mates of their youth. They talked of the historic names before their date, of Cleaveland and his voyages, of Handasyd Perkins, of Bromfield, of the great chiefs of a commerce which founded the city's prosperity, and which embraced all climes and regions; the Dutch colonies and coffee; the China trade and tea; the North-west coast and furs; the Cape, and its wines and oil; the pirates that used to harass the early adventurers; famous shipwrecks; great gains and magnificent losses; the splendor of the English nabobs and American residents at Calcutta; mutinies aboardship; the idiosyncrasies of certain sailors; the professional merits of certain black cooks. These varied topics and interests conspired to lend a glamour to the India trade as it had been, that at last moved Captain Butler to argument in proof of the feasibility of its revival. It was the explanation of this scheme that wearied Helen. At the same time she saw that Captain Butler did not mean to go very soon, for he had already sunk the old comrade in the theorist so far as to be saying "Well, sir," and "Why, sir,"

and "I tell you, sir." She got up—not without dropping her scissors from her lap, as the custom of her sex is—and gave him her hand, which he took in his left, without rising.

"Going to bed? That's right. I shall stay a bit yet. I want to talk with your father."

"Talk him into taking a little rest," said Helen, looking at the captain as she bent over her father to kiss him good-night.

"I shall give him all sorts of good advice," returned the captain, cheerily.

Her father held her hand fondly till she drew an arm's length away, and then relinquished it with a very tender "Good-night, my dear."

Helen did not mean to go to bed, and, when she reached her own room, she sat a long time there, working at Margaret's bonnet, and overhearing now and then some such words of the captain's as "dyes," "muslins," "ice," "teak," "gunny-bags," "shellac," "Company's choppers,"—a name of fearful note, descriptive of a kind of Calcutta handkerchief once much imported. She imagined that the captain was still talking of the India trade. Her father spoke so low that she could not make out any words of his. The sound of his voice somehow deeply touched her; his affection appealed to hers in that unintelligible murmur, as the disembodied religion of a far-heard hymn appeals to the solemnity of the listener's soul. She began to make a fantastic comparison of the qualities of her father's voice and the captain's, to the disadvantage of the captain's other qualities. She found that her father was of finer spirit and of gentler nature, and, by a natural transition, she perceived that it was a grander thing to be sitting alone in one's room with one's heart-ache than to be, perhaps, foolishly walking the piazza with one's accepted commonplace destiny, as Marian Butler was at that moment. At this point she laughed at herself, said "Poor Marian!" aloud, and recognized that her vagaries were making Captain Butler an ill return for his kindness in dropping in to chat with her father. She hoped he would not chat too long, and tire him out. And so her thoughts ran upon Robert again, and she heard no more of the talk below till after what seemed to her, starting from it, a prolonged reverie. Then she was aware of Captain Butler's boots chirping out of the library into the hall toward the door, with several pauses, and she caught fragments of talk again: "I had no idea it was as bad as that, Harkness * * * bad business, must see what can be done * * * weather it a few weeks longer * * * confoundedly straitened myself * * * pull you through," and, faintly, "Well, good-night, Joshua. I'll see you

in the morning." There was another pause, in which she fancied Captain Butler lighting his cigar at the chimney of the study-lamp with which her father would be following him to the door. The door closed, and her father went slowly back to the library, where she felt rather than heard him walking up and down. She wanted to go to him, but she would not; she wanted to call to him, but she remained silent. When, at last, she heard his step upon the stairs, heavily ascending, and saw the play of his lamp-light on the walls without, she stealthily turned down the gas that he might not think her awake. Half an hour later, she crept to his door, which stood a little ajar, and whispered, "Papa!"

"What is it, Helen?" He was in bed, but his voice sounded very wakeful. "What is it, my dear?"

"Oh, I don't know!" She flung herself on her knees beside his bed in the dark, and put her arms about his neck. "But I feel so unhappy!"

"About—" began her father, but she quickly interrupted.

"No, no! About *you*, papa! You seem so sad and careworn, and I'm nothing but a burden and a trouble to you!"

"You are nothing but a comfort and a help to me. Poor child! You mustn't be worried by my looks. I shall be all right in the morning. Come, come!"

"But weren't you perplexed somehow about business? Weren't you thinking about those accounts?"

"No, my dear."

"What were you thinking of?"

"Well, Helen, I was thinking of your mother and your little brothers."

"Oh!" said Helen, with the kind of recoil which the young must feel even from the dearest dead. "Do you often think of them?"

"No, I believe, not often. Never so much as to-night, since I first lost them; the house

seemed full of them then. I suppose these impressions must recur."

"Oh, doesn't it make you feel strange?" asked Helen, cowering a little closer to him.

"Why should it? It doesn't make me feel strange to have your face against mine."

"No; but— Oh, don't, don't talk of such things, or I can't endure it! Papa, papa! I love you so, it breaks my heart to have you talk in that way. How wicked I must be, not to like you to think of them! But don't, to-night! I want you to think of me, and what we are going to do together, and about all our plans for next winter, and for that new house, and everything. Will you? Promise!"

Her father pressed her cheek closer against his, and she felt the fond smile which she could not see in the dark. He gave her his promise, and then began to talk about her going down to the Butlers', which it seemed the captain had urged further after she had bidden him good-night. The captain was going to stay in Boston a day or two, and Mr. Harkness thought he might run down with him at the end of the week. Helen did not care to go, but with this in view she did not care to say so. She let her father comfort her with caressing words and touches, as when she was a child, and she frankly staid her weak-heartedness upon his love. She was ashamed, but she could not help it nor wish to help it. As she rested her head upon his pillow she heard his watch ticking under it; in this sound all the years since she was a little girl were lost. Then his voice began to sink drowsily, as it used to do in remote times, when she had wearied him out with her troubles. He answered at random, and his talk wandered so that it made her laugh. That roused him to full consciousness of her parting kiss. "Good-night," he said, and held her hand, and drew her down by it again, and kissed her once more.

(To be continued.)



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A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

A STORY OF TO-DAY.

By CHARLES READE,

AUTHOR OF "FOUL PLAY," "GRIFFITH GAUNT," "PUT
YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE."

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

RICHARD BASSETT eagerly offered his services to break off the obnoxious match. But Miss Somerset was beginning to be mortified at having shown so much passion before a stranger.

"What have you to do with it?" said she, sharply.

"Everything. I love Miss Bruce."
"O yes; I forgot that. Anything else? There is, now. I see it in your eye. What is it?"

"Sir Charles's estates are mine by right, and they will return to my line if he does not marry and have issue."

"O, I see," said Mrs. Somerset. "That is so like a man. It's always love, and something more important, with you. Well, give me your address. I'll write to you if I want you."

"Highly flattered," said Bassett, ironically, — wrote his address, and left her.

Miss Somerset then sat down and wrote, —

"DEAR SIR CHARLES, — please call here, I want to speak to you.
"Yours respectfully,
"RHODA SOMERSET."

Sir Charles obeyed this missive, and the lady received him with a gracious and smiling manner, all put on and cat-like. She talked with him of indifferent things for more than an hour, still watching to see if he would tell her of his own accord.

When she was quite sure he would not, she said, —

"Do you know there's a ridiculous report about that you are going to be married?"

"Indeed!"

"They even tell her name, — Miss Bruce. Do you know the girl?"

"Yes."

"Is she pretty?"

"Very."

"Modest?"

"As an angel."

"And are you going to marry her?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a villain."

"The deuce, I am!"

"You are, to abandon a woman who has sacrificed all for you."

Sir Charles looked puzzled, and then smiled; but was too polite to give his thoughts vent. Nor was it necessary; Miss Somerset, whose brave eyes never left the person she was speaking to, fired up at the smile alone, and she burst into a torrent of remonstrance, not to say vituperation. Sir Charles endeavored once or twice to stop it, but it was not to be stopped; so at last he quietly took up his hat to go.

He was arrested at the door by a rustle and a fall. He turned round, and there was Miss Somerset lying on her back, grinding her white teeth and clutching the air.

He ran to the bell and rang it violently, then knelt down and did his best to keep her from hurting herself; but, as generally happens in these cases, his interference made her more violent. He had hard work to keep her from battering her head against the floor, and her arms worked like windmills.

Hearing the bell tugged so violently, a pretty page ran headlong into the room — saw — and, without an instant's diminution of speed, described a curve and ran headlong out, screaming "Polly! Polly!"

The next moment, the housekeeper, an elderly woman, trotted in at the door, saw her mistress's condition, and stood stock-still, calling "Polly," but with the most perfect tranquillity the mind can conceive.

In ran a strapping housemaid, with black eyes and brown arms, went down on her knees and said firmly, though respectfully, "Give her me, sir."

She got behind her struggling mistress, pulled her up into her own lap, and pinned her by the wrists with a vigorous grasp.

The lady struggled, and ground her teeth

audibly, and flung her arms abroad. The maid applied all her rustic strength and harder muscle to hold her within bounds. The four arms went to and fro in a magnificent struggle, and neither could the maid hold the mistress still, nor the mistress shake off the maid's grasp, nor strike anything to hurt herself. Sir Charles, thrust out of the play, looked on with pity and anxiety, and the little page at the door — combining art and nature — stuck stock-still in a military attitude, and blubbered aloud.

As for the housekeeper, she remained in the middle of the room with folded arms, and looked down on the struggle with a singular expression of countenance. There was no agitation whatever, but a sort of thoughtful examination, half cynical, half admiring.

However, as soon as the boy's sobs reached her ear she wakened up, and said, tenderly, "What is the child crying for? Run and get a basin of water and fling it all over her; that will bring her to in a minute."

The page departed swiftly on this benevolent errand.

Then the lady gave a deep sigh, and ceased to struggle.

Next she stared in all their faces, and seemed to return to consciousness.

Next she spoke, but very feebly. "Help me up," she sighed.

Sir Charles and Polly raised her, and now there was a marvellous change. The

glance, and retired; the boy followed them with his basin, sore perplexed, but learning life in this admirable school.

Sir Charles then, with the utmost kindness, endeavored to reconcile the weeping and dishevelled fair to that separation which circumstances rendered necessary. But she was inconsolable, and he left the house, perplexed and grieved: not but what it gratified his vanity a little to find himself beloved all in a moment, and the Somerset unvexed. He could not help thinking how wide must be the circle of his charms, which had won the affections of two beautiful women so opposite in character as Bella Bruce and La Somerset.

The passion of this latter seemed to grow. She wrote to him every day, and begged him to call on her.

She called on him, — she who had never called on a man before.

She raged with jealousy; she melted with grief. She played on him with all a woman's artillery, and, at last, actually wrung from him what she called a reprieve.

Richard Bassett called on her, but she would not receive him; so then he wrote to her, urging co-operation, and she replied, frankly, that she took no interest in his affairs, but that she was devoted to Sir Charles, and should keep him for herself. Vanity tempted her to add that he (Sir Charles) was with her every day, and the wedding postponed.

This last seemed too good to be true,

beg you to accept my apologies for not coming sooner. Press of business, etc."

"Why have you come at all? That is the question," inquired the lady, bluntly.

"I bring the draft of a deed for your approval. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, if it is not very long."

He began to read it.

The lady interrupted him characteristically: —

"It's a beastly rigmorale. What does it mean, — in three words?"

"Sir Charles Bassett secures to Rhoda Somerset four hundred pounds a year, while single; this is reduced to two hundred if you marry. The deed further assigns to you, without reserve, the beneficial lease of this house, and all the furniture and effects, plate, linen, wine, etc."

"I see: a bribe."

"Nothing of the kind, madam. When Sir Charles instructed me to prepare this deed, he expected no opposition on your part to his marriage; but he thought it due to him and to yourself to mark his esteem for you, and his recollection of the pleasant hours he has spent in your company."

Miss Somerset's eyes searched the lawyer's face. He stood the battery unflinchingly. She altered her tone, and asked politely, and almost respectfully, whether she might see that paper.

Mr. Oldfield gave it her. She took it, and ran her eye over it; in doing which, she raised it so that she could think behind it unobserved. She handed it back at last, with the remark that Sir Charles was a gentleman, and had done the right thing.

"He has; and you will do the right thing too, will you not?"

"I don't know. I am just beginning to fall in love with him myself."

"Jealousy, madam, not love," said the old lawyer. "Come, now. I see you are a young lady of rare good sense; look the thing in the face: Sir Charles is a landed gentleman, he must marry and have heirs. He is over thirty, and his time has come. He has shown himself your friend, why not be his? He has given you the means to marry a gentleman of moderate income, or to marry beneath you, if you prefer it —"

"And most of us do —"

"Then why not make his path smooth? Why distress him with your tears and remonstrances?"

He continued in this strain for some time, appealing to her good sense and her better feelings.

When he had done she said, very quietly, "How about the ponies and my brown mare? — are they down in the deed?"

"I think not, but if you will do your part handsomely, I'll guarantee you shall have them."

"You are a good soul"; then, after a pause, "Now just you tell me exactly what you want me to do for all this."

Oldfield was pleased with this question. He said, "I wish you to abstain from writing to Sir Charles, and him to visit you only once more before his marriage, just to shake hands and part, with mutual friendship and good wishes."

"You are right," said she, softly; "best for us both, and only fair to the girl." Then, with sudden and eager curiosity, "Is she very pretty?"

"I don't know."

"What, has n't he told you?"

"He says she is lovely, and every way adorable; but then he is in love. The chances are she is not half so handsome as yourself."

"And yet he is in love with her?"

"Over head and ears."

"I don't believe it. If he was really in love with one woman, he could n't be just to another. I could n't. He'll be coming back to me in a few months."

"God forbid!"

"Thank you, old gentleman."

Mr. Oldfield began to utter excuses. She interrupted him: "O, bother all that: I like you none the worse for speaking your mind."

Then, after a pause, "Now, excuse me, but suppose Sir Charles should change his mind, and never sign this paper?"

"I pledge my professional credit."

"That is enough, sir; I see I can trust you. Well, then, I consent to break off with Sir Charles, and only see him once more — as a friend. Poor Sir Charles, I hope he will be happy" (she squeezed out a tear for him), — "happier than I am. And when he



"I HAVE BUT ONE FRIEND IN THE WORLD, AND HE HAS FORSAKEN ME!"

vigorous vixen was utterly weak, and limp as a wet towel, — a woman of jelly. As such they handled her, and deposited her gingerly on the sofa.

Now the page ran in hastily with the water. Up jumps the poor lax sufferer with flashing eyes: "You dare to come near me with it!" Then to the female servants: "Call yourselves women? and water my lilac silk, not two hours old?" Then to the housekeeper: "You old monster, you wanted it for your Polly. Get out of my sight, the lot!"

Then, suddenly remembering how feeble she was, she sank instantly down, and turned piteously and languidly to Sir Charles. "They eat my bread, and rob me, and hate me," said she, faintly. "I have but one friend on earth." She leaned tenderly towards Sir Charles as that friend; but before she quite reached him she started back, her eyes filled with sudden horror. "And he forsakes me!" she cried; and so turned away from him despairingly, and began to cry, bitterly, with head averted over the sofa, and one hand hanging by her side for Sir Charles to take and comfort her. He tried to take it. It resisted; and, under cover of that little disturbance, the other hand dexterously whipped two pins out of her hair. The long brown tresses — all her own — fell over her eyes, and down to her waist; and the picture of distressed beauty was complete.

Even so did the women of antiquity conquer male pity — "solutis crinibus."

The females interchanged a meaning

so Richard Bassett set his servant to talk to the servants in Portman Square. He learned that the wedding was now to be on the 15th of June, instead of the 31st of May.

Convinced that this postponement was only a blind, and that the marriage would never be, he breathed more freely at the news.

But the fact is, although Sir Charles had yielded so far to dread of scandal, he was ashamed of himself, and his shame became remorse when he detected a furtive tear in the dove-like eyes of her he really loved and esteemed.

He went and told his trouble to Mr. Oldfield. "I am afraid she will do something desperate," he said.

Mr. Oldfield heard him out, and then asked him, had he told Miss Somerset what he was going to settle on her.

"Not I. She is not in a condition to be influenced by that, at present."

"Let me try her. The draft is ready. I'll call on her to-morrow."

He did call, and was told she did not know him.

"You tell her I'm a lawyer, and it is very much to her interest to see me," said Mr. Oldfield to the page.

He was admitted, but not to a tête-à-tête. Polly was kept in the room. The Somerset had peeped, and Oldfield was an old fellow, with white hair; if he had been a young fellow, with black hair, she might have thought that precaution less necessary.

"First, madam," said Oldfield, "I must

does come, he can sign the deed, you know."

Mr. Oldfield left her, and joined Sir Charles at Long's, as had been previously agreed.

"It is all right, Sir Charles! she is a sensible girl, and will give you no further trouble."

"How did you get over the hysterics?"

"We dispensed with them. She saw at once it was to be business, not sentiment. You are to pay her one more visit, to sign, and part friends. If you please, I'll make that appointment with both parties as soon as the deed is engrossed. O, by the by, she did shed a tear or two, but she dried them to ask me for the ponies and the brown mare."

Sir Charles's vanity was mortified. But he laughed it off, and said she should have them, of course.

So now his mind was at ease, his conscience was at rest, and he could give his whole time where he had given his heart.

Richard Bassett learned, through his servant, that the wedding-dresses were ordered. He called on Miss Somerset. She was out.

Polly opened the door, and gave him a look of admiration—due to his fresh color—that encouraged him to try and enlist her in his service.

He questioned her, and she told him in a general way how matters were going. "But," said she, "why not come and talk to her yourself? Ten to one but she tells you. She is pretty outspoken."

"My pretty dear," said Richard, "she never will receive me."

"O, but I'll make her," said Polly.

And she did exert her influence as follows: "Lookee here, the cousin's a coming to-morrow, and I've been and promised he should see you."

"What did you do that for?"

"Why, he's a well-looking chap, and a beautiful color, fresh from the country, like me. And he's a gentleman, and got an estate belike; and why not put youn to him, and so marry him, and be a lady? You might have me about ye all the same, till my turn comes."

"No, no," said Rhoda; "that's not the man for me. If ever I marry, it must be one of my own sort, or else a fool, like Marsh, that I can make a slave of."

"Well, any way, you must see him, not to make a fool of me, for I did promise him; which, now I think 'on't 't was very good of me, for I could find in my heart to ast him down into the kitchen, instead of bringing him up stairs to you."

All this ended, somehow, in Mr. Bassett being admitted.

To his anxious inquiry how matters stood, she replied, coolly, that Sir Charles and herself were parted by mutual consent.

"What, after all your protestations!" said Bassett, bitterly.

But Miss Somerset was not in an irascible humor just then. She shrugged her shoulders, and said,—

"Yes, I remember I put myself in a passion, and said some ridiculous things. But one can't be always a fool. I have come to my senses. This sort of thing always does end, you know. Most of them part enemies, but he and I part friends and well-wishers."

"And you throw me over as if I was nobody," said Richard, white with anger.

"Why, what are you to me?" said the Somerset. "O, I see. You thought to make a cat's-paw of me. Well, you won't, then."

"In other words, you have been bought off."

"No, I have not. I am not to be bought by anybody—and I am not to be insulted by you, you ruffian! How dare you come here and affront a lady in her own house,—a lady, whose shoe-strings your betters are ready to tie, you brute? If you want to be a lauded proprietor, go and marry some ugly old hag that's got it, and no eyesight left to see you're no gentleman. Sir Charles's land you'll never have; a better man has got it, and means to keep it for him and his. Here, Polly! Polly! take this man down to the kitchen, and teach him manners if you can; he is not fit for my drawing-room, by a long chalk."

Polly arrived in time to see the flashing eyes, the swelling veins; and to hear the fair orator's peroration."

"What, you are in your tantrums again!" said she. "Come along, sir. Needs must when the devil drives. You'll break a bloodvessel some day, my lady, like your father afore ye."

And with this homely suggestion, which always sobered Miss Somerset, and indeed frightened her out of her wits, she withdrew the offender.

She did not take him into the kitchen, but into the dining-room, and there he had a long talk with her, and gave her a sovereign.

She promised to inform him if anything important should occur.

He went away, pondering and scowling deeply.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

Sir Charles Bassett was now living in Elysium. Never was rake more thoroughly transformed. Every day he sat for hours at the feet of Bella Bruce, admiring her soft feminine ways and virgin modesty, even more than her beauty. And her visible blush whenever he appeared suddenly, and the soft commotion and yielding in her lovely frame whenever he drew near, betrayed his magnetic influence, and told all but the blind she adored him.

She would decline all invitations to dine with him and her father,—a strong-minded old admiral, whose authority was unbounded, only, to Bella's regret, very rarely exerted. Nothing would have pleased her more than to be forbidden this, and commanded that; but no! the admiral was a lion with an enormous paw, only he could not be got to put it into every pie.

In this charming society the hours glided, and the wedding-day drew close. So deeply and sincerely was Sir Charles in love, that when Mr. Oldfield's letter came, appointing the day and hour to sign Miss Somerset's deed, he was unwilling to go, and wrote back to ask if the deed could not be sent to his house. Mr. Oldfield replied that the parties to the deed and the witnesses must meet, and it would be unadvisable, for several reasons, to irritate the lady's susceptibility previous to signature: the appointment having been made at her house, it had better remain so.

That day soon came.

Sir Charles, being due in Mayfair at 2 P. M., compensated himself for the less agreeable business to come by going earlier than usual to Portman Square. By this means he caught Miss Bruce and two other young ladies inspecting bridal dresses. Bella blushed and looked ashamed, and, to the surprise of her friends, sent the dresses away, and set herself to talk rationally with Sir Charles,—as rationally as lovers can.

The ladies took the cue, and retired in disgust.

Sir Charles apologized. "This is too bad of me. I come at an unheard-of hour, and frighten away your fair friends; but the fact is, I have an appointment at two, and I don't know how long they will keep me, so I thought I would make sure of two happy hours at the least."

And delightful hours they were. Bella Bruce, excited by this little surprise, leaned softly on his shoulder, and prattled her maiden love like some warbling fountain.

Sir Charles, transfigured by love, answered her in kind,—three months ago he could not,—and they compared pretty little plans of wedded life, and had small differences, and ended by agreeing.

Complete and prompt accord upon two points; first, they would not have a single quarrel, like other people; their love should never lose its delicate bloom; second, they would grow old together, and die the same day,—the same minute if possible; if not, they must be content with the same day, but, on that, inexorable.

But soon after this came a skirmish. Each wanted to obey t' other.

Sir Charles argued that Bella was better than he, and therefore more fit to conduct the pair.

Bella, who thought him divinely good, pounced on this reason furiously. He defended it. He admitted, with exemplary candor, that he was good now,—*"awfully good."* But he assured her that he had been anything but good until he knew her; now she had been always good; therefore, he argued, as his goodness came originally from her, for her to obey him would be a little too much like the moon commanding the sun.

"That is too ingenious for me, Charles," said Bella. "And for shame! Nobody was ever so good as you are. I look up to you and— Now I could stop your mouth in a minute. I have only to remind you that I shall swear at the altar to obey you, and you will not swear to obey me. But I will not crush you under the Prayer-book—no, dearest; but, indeed, to obey is a want of my nature, and I marry you to supply that want—and that's a story, for I marry you because I love, and honor, and worship, and adore you to distraction, my own—own—own!" With this she flung

herself passionately, yet modestly, on his shoulder, and, being there, murmured coaxingly, *"You will let me obey you, Charles?"*

Thereupon Sir Charles felt highly gelatinous, and lost, for the moment, all power of resistance or argument.

"Ah, you will; and then you will remind me of my dear mother. She knew how to command; but as for poor dear papa, he is very disappointing. In selecting an admiral for my parent, I made sure of being ordered about. Instead of that—now I'll show you—there he is in the next room, inventing a new system of signals, poor dear—"

She threw the folding-doors open.

"Papa, dear, shall I ask Charles to dinner to-day?"

"As you please, my dear."

"Do you think I had better walk or ride this afternoon?"

"Whichever you prefer."

"There," said Bella, "I told you so. That is always the way. Papa, dear, you used always to be firing guns at sea. Do, please, fire one in this house—just one—before I leave it, and make the very windows rattle."

"I beg your pardon, Bella. I never wasted powder at sea. If the convoy sailed well and steered right I never barked at them. You are a modest, sensible girl, and have always steered a good course. Why should I hoist a petticoat and play the small tyrant? Wait till I see you going to do something wrong or silly."

"Ah, then you would fire a gun, papa?"

"Ay, a broadside."

"Well, that is something," said Bella, as she closed the door softly.

"No, no; it amounts to just nothing," said Sir Charles, "for you never will do anything wrong or silly. I'll accommodate you. I have thought of a way. I shall give you some blank cards; you shall write on them; 'I think I should like to do so and so.' You shall be careless, and leave them about; I'll find them, and bluster, and say, 'I command you to do so and so, Bella Bassett;'—the very thing on the card, you know."

Bella colored to the brow with pleasure and modesty. After a pause, she said, "How sweet! The worst of it is, I should get my own way. Now what I want is to submit my will to yours. A gentle tyrant,—that is what you must be to Bella Bassett. O, you sweet, sweet for calling me that!"

These projects were interrupted by a servant announcing luncheon.

This made Sir Charles look hastily at his watch, and he found it was past two o'clock. "How time flies in this house!" said he.

"I must go, dearest; I am behind my appointment already. What do you do this afternoon?"

"Whatever you please, my own."

"I could get away by four."

"Then I will stay at home for you."

He left her reluctantly, and she followed him to the head of the stairs, and hung over the balusters as if she would like to fly after him.

He turned at the street door, saw that radiant and gentle face beaming after him, and they kissed hands to each other by one impulse, as if they were parting for ever so long.

He had gone scarcely half an hour when a letter, addressed to her, was left at the door by a private messenger.

"Any answer?" inquired the servant.

"No."

The letter was sent up, and delivered to her on a silver salver.

She opened it; it was a thing new to her in her young life,—an anonymous letter.

"Miss Bruce,—I am almost a stranger to you, but I know your character from others, and cannot bear to see you abused. You are said to be about to marry Sir Charles Bassett. I think you can hardly be aware that he is connected with a lady of doubtful repute, called Somerset, and neither your beauty nor your virtue has prevailed to detach him from that connection."

"If, on engaging himself to you, he had abandoned her, I should not have said a word. But the truth is, he visits her constantly, and I blush to say that when he leaves you this day, it will be to spend the afternoon at her house."

"I enclose you her address, and you can learn in ten minutes whether I am a slanderer or, what I wish to be,

"A FRIEND OF INJURED INNOCENCE."

AN UNRESOLVED DISCORD.

Norris, W E

Littell's Living Age (1844-1896); Nov 17, 1894; 203, 2628; American Periodicals
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AN UNRESOLVED DISCORD.

My first meeting with that discordant fellow — for discordant he was and remained throughout my acquaintance with him, and this, I suppose, accounted for his being at once so

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attractive and so irritating — took place on a cold, murky November afternoon. I had shut up the organ, after playing a brief voluntary, the choir and the clergy had trooped off, the small congregation was dispersing, and I was about to leave the cathedral, when he strode up to me out of one of the side aisles and said, "I believe you are Dr. Duckett?"

"That is my name," I answered. "What do you want?"

The truth is that I was not in the best of tempers. Those young rascals of boys had been singing carelessly, as they often do, and if there is one thing I hate more than another it is to be accosted just after a service. People ought to understand that one wants a little time to recover oneself and to forgive the miscreants who will persist in spoiling everything, in spite of all one's efforts to guide them in the way they should go. However, he did not seem to be affronted by my curt manner.

"I want you," said he, holding out a small roll of manuscript, "just to glance over this and give me your opinion of it. It's an *Agnus* I have written, and I think myself that it's rather good. In fact, I *know* it's good; though there may be technical errors in it which you will easily detect. I'm only a beginner; but I know enough about music to know that you are as high an authority as there is in England, and that you aren't blinded by prejudice and routine, as most of these stick-in-the-mud cathedral organists are. That's why I thought I would apply to you."

I looked at this somewhat peremptory and decidedly cool young gentleman. There was not much light left to scrutinize him by; but I could see that he was tall, dark, slender, and handsome. Of course I had no particular reason for obliging him by correcting his, doubtless faulty, composition; still I am not, I hope, quite as churlish as I am sometimes accused of being, and my heart goes out to a brother musician. One can always recognize them at a glance, I find — that is, the genuine ones, not the correct, respectable,

successful rank and file. Perhaps, too, I may have been a trifle flattered by his incidental description of me — who can boast of being superior to the subtle influences of flattery even at the advanced age of forty-eight? Anyhow, I said: —

"Well, you are welcome to my opinion, such as it is. I will find time to examine what you have written to-night, and if you will call at my house between twelve and one o'clock to-morrow, Mr. —"

"Vincent," he interpolated impatiently. "Not that it matters."

"Mr. Vincent, I will either give you a verbal reply or leave one for you. I dare say you know where I live."

He said he could easily find out. But perhaps he thought that the simplest way of doing so was to accompany me to my own door in the cloisters; for he walked along beside me and was good enough to tell me, on the way, exactly why it was that the anthem had gone to pieces. I did not mind that; for it was true enough that, as I said before, the boys had not been taking any trouble, and I quite agreed with him that no choir could help being more or less injuriously affected by that drawling, superannuated minor canon; still it did strike me that if this unknown youth was destined to fail as a composer, his failure would hardly be due to any excess of modesty or timidity. He shook hands with me at parting and promised to look in about one o'clock on the next day.

"I suppose that is your luncheon hour?" he remarked. "Or do you dine in the middle of the day? It's all the same to me; only I should like to find you at home, because you're sure to take an interest in me, and the fact is that I rather want you to put me in the way of earning my living here for a time."

With this truly startling announcement, which he made as calmly as if he had been observing that it was a chilly evening, he marched off, stopping for a moment to light a cigarette.

Mrs. Duckett was quite vexed when I narrated the episode to her, and

could not see anything funny in it at all. She said that she had never heard of such impertinence, and added that she presumed it would end, as it always did, in my being robbed of five or ten pounds by an impudent and obvious swindler. I seldom contradict Mrs. Duckett, but I would beg readers of these lines to believe that I am not quite the fool she takes me for. As organist of Minchester Cathedral, I have a snug little house and a fairly good salary; besides which, I make enough by teaching to pay my way; still, I cannot afford to throw away five or ten pounds either upon swindlers or deserving mendicants, nor am I in the habit of doing any such thing.

As for Mr. Vincent, I looked at his *Agnus* in the course of the evening, and came to the conclusion that it would be a very long time before he made his living by musical composition. It was the work of a downright ignoramus, full of the most egregious mistakes from start to finish; and yet — how shall I explain what I mean to non-musical people? — there were passages in it which more than half tempted me to suspect the fellow of being an uninstructed genius. He had tried to do things — I don't say he had done them — which, to the best of my belief, nobody has ever thought of before, and I suppose, after all, that what artists of any kind love and delight in most is originality.

At all events, he made no mistake in anticipating with so much confidence that he would interest me, and no sooner had I conducted him to our little dining-room on the morrow than I perceived that he was beginning to interest my wife into the bargain. He was, in fact, when seen in the full light of day, an uncommonly good-looking young man, with large, luminous, dark-brown eyes, clearly cut features, and a great crop of wavy black hair, which he wore rather too long for my taste, but not too long to suit that of the ladies — who, I have noticed, always admire flowing locks. Moreover, his style of conversation, though a trifle brusque, was of a nature to arouse curiosity.

He favored us with plenty of it, while satisfying the cravings of a healthy appetite; and I am bound to confess that, if he was rather too dictatorial upon the subject of musical matters for so inexperienced a judge, his ideas were not very far wrong. By which, of course, I mean that they coincided with my own. They coincided likewise with those of Mrs. Duckett. At least, I presume that they did; for, as we left the dining-room, she took occasion to whisper in my ear, "Samuel, that is going to be a great man; you must on no account let him slip through your fingers!"

Now, it is certain that no man can become great as a musical composer until he has mastered the fundamental principles of the art, and this was what I told Mr. Vincent, after I had given him a cigar and had pointed out to him that his *Agnus* in its present form was altogether inadmissible. He took my censure much more submissively than I had expected — indeed, I have never up to this moment of writing been able to understand how one and the same human being could be so inordinately vain and so unaffectedly humble as he was. He admitted that his knowledge of harmony and counterpoint was as yet superficial; he even went so far as to acknowledge that there were moments when he did not feel quite sure of his power to create.

"But that," he made haste to add, "is only when I am down in the mouth, as one is apt to be when one is beset by despicable material worries. I should like to take a few lessons from you, Dr. Duckett; but the nuisance is that I can't possibly pay you for them. As far as that goes, I can't very well pay for my daily bread just now, and I was wondering whether you couldn't help me to get half-a-dozen singing pupils — so as to keep the wolf from the door, you know."

It was so likely that, in my responsible position, I should hand over half-a-dozen of my own pupils to an instructor of whose antecedents and capabilities I knew absolutely nothing!

Well, it was, no doubt, very unlikely

that I should behave in that imprudent manner; yet, as a matter of fact, I ended by doing something almost as absurd. I told him that he was welcome, without payment, to such teaching as I could give him. That, I think, was right enough, because members of one calling should always be ready to assist one another. But perhaps I was hardly justified in advancing him a trifle to meet immediate necessities, and I suppose I ought not to have said that I could recommend him to several vocal young ladies of whom I longed to be rid. I ought not to have said so, I mean, in view of his blank refusal to tell me who he was or where he came from. He said I could see for myself that he was a gentleman, and that ought to be enough; he must decline to be cross-examined about his past life. But as to his capabilities, how could I doubt them after hearing him sing? It was merely in order to give me an idea of what he wanted the solo portion of his *Ag-nus* to sound like that he sat down to the piano and showed me, to my delight and amazement, what he could do. Not only had he a tenor voice of such quality and volume as I had only heard equalled two or three times in my life before, but it was evident that he had been well and carefully taught how to use it. He owned that this was the case in reply to my admiring ejaculations — by which, for the rest, he seemed to set remarkably little store.

"Oh, I have been taught and I can teach," he said. "That's nothing; any fool who has a voice can be made to sing, just as any fool who has eyes in his head can be made to read. The select few are those who can produce material for the common herd to work upon."

He thought that he belonged to that select band; possibly he did. In any event, I found him irresistible, though I have probably failed to convey the least convincing impression of his personal charm. Fortunately for me, my wife was as completely bewitched as I was — if not more so — and during the weeks that followed she could not make

too much of the mysterious Mr. Vincent. The mystery with which he was pleased to surround himself was doubtless an additional attraction to her. I believe she took him for a prince in disguise, and built up all manner of romantic histories concerning him upon somewhat slender foundations; but I am not concerned to deny that he was a delightful companion, as well as an apt pupil. Those whom it has been my duty to instruct generally accuse me, I believe, of being rough, rude, and impatient. I cannot call myself a good master, because the slowness with which the average human brain moves exasperates me so. But Vincent almost always saw things at once and never resented the occasional explosions of strong language which I do not trouble myself to restrain when dealing with one of my own sex. He would laugh very good-humoredly at such times, and call himself a duffer. On the other hand, he permitted himself to criticise my methods of interpreting certain composers with a freedom which I really do not think I should have tolerated from anybody else.

What distressed me a good deal was that I felt sure that the man was in absolute want. He would not tell me where he was lodging, but circumstantial evidence convinced me that he had not money enough to pay for the necessities of life; and although it was generally easy to make some excuse for giving him his dinner, I could not very well do more without being asked. As for the few pupils whom I ventured to secure for him, they were daughters of tradespeople from whom no high remuneration was to be expected. However, he was destined ere long to gain a pupil whose wealth, liberality, and social standing left nothing to be desired. The Honorable Netta Thrupp, only child of Lord and Lady De Farnworth, had for some time past condescended to take intermittent singing lessons from me, and honesty compels me to own that I had submitted to the horrible noises with which she tortured my ears for no better reason than that

she was what she was. Lord De Farnworth is such a very great man in our parts—for the matter of that, I suppose he is a very great man everywhere—that it would never have done for me to insult his daughter. Kind fate ordained that I should be delivered from her without laying myself open to one of those severe lectures from Mrs. Duckett which I dare say I sometimes deserve. *Sic me servavit Apollo.*

I had with some difficulty persuaded Vincent to sing at an afternoon concert which was given, shortly before Christmas, by the Mincheste Musical Society; I thought it would be a good advertisement for him, if it did not bring him much in the shape of immediate and tangible reward. At first he would have nothing to do with it, for he never was in the slightest degree vain upon the subject of his wonderful voice, and always spoke with the deepest contempt of ballad-singing; but as I persisted, he ended by shrugging his shoulders impatiently and giving way, the result of which was that he had a magnificent success. I had expected no less; still I was rejoiced to think that I had been the humble means of securing local notoriety for my *protégé*, and I remarked to my wife, after we had returned home and were having a quiet cup of tea together, that a great weight had been taken off my mind.

"You will see," said I, "that Vincent will be taken up by all the grantees now. Everybody was there, and everybody was delighted. This afternoon's work ought to be worth a dozen pupils to him, especially as he is so good-looking."

Amelia said she wished I wouldn't be so worldly and material—as if my lack of worldly wisdom were not the very thing with which she is forever reproaching me! Mr. Vincent, she declared, was going to be a musical composer of European celebrity; much he would care in a few years' time for Minchester and its poor little grantees!

"That," I observed, "may or may not be the case; at present I see no reason whatsoever to suppose that our

young friend will ever be a composer at all. But you will admit that the butcher and the baker won't accept the prospect of future celebrity in lieu of immediate cash payments. Therefore I say it is a good thing that the De Farnworths were sitting in the front row, and no bad thing that Vincent has a handsome face as well as a glorious voice."

Hardly had these words of common sense passed my lips when there came a rushing sound from the staircase outside; the door was violently thrown open, and in burst Miss Netta Thrupp, unannounced. She is a most obstreperous young woman; I am told that it is the fashion to be so, but cannot speak from personal knowledge of the subject. Anyhow, I am sure she must be fashionable, because her father is an ennobled gin distiller of immense wealth, and she has always mixed with the very best society. Just now her little round face was flushed and her little round eyes were gleaming with excitement; her entire person (which is likewise little and round) quivered with the same emotion.

"Dr. Duckett," said she, "I hear you know all about that beautiful and talented young man. Who is he? Where does he live? How can one get hold of him? I warn you that I am going to throw you over and appoint him my singing master in ordinary forthwith. Sorry if you don't like being superseded; but what else could you expect?"

I replied with equal truth and politeness that there are certain honorable employments from which no man who possesses a musical ear and an average amount of self-respect can object to being ousted, and then I told her all that I knew about Vincent—which, to be sure, was not much. I could not even furnish her with his address, and I was just inquiring whether I should send him up to Farnworth to receive instructions, when he himself walked in. She flew at him, jabbering and gesticulating like a little monkey.

"Dear Mr. Vincent, how delightful of you to appear just when you were

wanted ! I was determined not to go home without finding you and telling you that you are simply adorable ! You have taken me nearer to heaven this afternoon than I have ever been before in my life, and if you refuse to give me lessons I shall die, and go somewhere or other—not to heaven, I am afraid. But you *won't* refuse, will you ? Come back and dine with us—I'll drive you in my pony-cart—and we'll make all the arrangements. My people will be charmed to see you, though they don't know one note from another. But they said you looked awfully distinguished—and so you do, you know."

I quite thought he would have been disgusted, but he wasn't ; on the contrary he appeared to be pleased and flattered. There was no harmonizing that fellow. Sometimes I almost shared my wife's enthusiasm about him ; at other times I felt by no means sure that he was not a very silly and vulgar specimen of humanity. Perhaps, however, he showed his superiority to the false shame that commonly afflicts silly and vulgar people by replying :—

"I should like nothing better than to dine with you, Miss Thrupp ; but, unfortunately, I haven't any evening clothes, and unless I can buy a suit at a slop-shop for twenty-seven shillings and sixpence, I must remain without any ; for that sum represents the whole of my available funds."

"Evening clothes be bothered !" returned the vivacious Miss Netta ; "angels don't wear 'em—at least, I never heard that they did. Come as you are, and be worshipped !"

Well, he went ; and no doubt he was worshipped, and no doubt he liked it. One may choose to sneer at the fools whose heads are turned by the adulation of other fools ; but I am afraid it must be admitted that adulation is seldom wholly distasteful to any of us, and I have noticed in the course of my career that great musicians (I don't know any other great people) are not exempt from that species of weakness. Lord and Lady De Farnworth, whom I

called great just now, but with whom I could only boast a very slight acquaintance, were worthy sort of people, charitable, hospitable—perhaps a little offensive at times, though never intentionally so, I am sure. Very likely they enjoyed patronizing this bright, rising star and exhibiting him to the crowd of friends with whom their huge modern mansion was always packed. Even if they had not enjoyed it, they would probably have had to do it ; for they were completely under the thumb of their imperious, plain-featured little daughter.

From that day forth Vincent spent a great deal of his time at Farnworth—rather too much of it, I sometimes thought ; although it was, of course, an advantage to him from one point of view to be thus honored. What I was afraid of—and certain fatuous speeches of his tended to confirm my fears—was that he would misunderstand a spoilt child's caprice and would seriously imagine that he had made a conquest of one of the greatest heiresses in England. I felt it my duty to warn him that his fine friends would assuredly forget his existence as soon as they moved up to London ; but he only laughed and replied that they would be very welcome to do so if they could.

"They and all the rest of the world will be reminded of my existence before long," he added, in one of those singular outbursts of conceit and self-confidence of which he had not been cured by encounter with inflexible technical difficulties.

He had learnt a good deal in a wonderfully short space of time ; but I need hardly say that he was still very far from being fit to grapple with the obstacles that bar the path of half-instructed composers. Yet nothing that I could say would keep him from composing. I found out that he was in the habit of sitting up more than half the night through, working at a symphony (nothing less than a symphony, if you please !) which he had in hand, and which he was so good as to promise that I should see when completed. What was the use of telling a lunatic

like that that he might as well under-
take to build a palace or an ironclad ?

One comfort was that he had now a sufficiency of pupils and was able to move into avowable quarters not far from the Precincts. The patronage of the Thrupps had been, as I foresaw that it would be, invaluable to him in a pecuniary sense, and Miss Netta was not the only young lady who decided to desert old Gruff-and-grim (it was, I regret to say, by this disrespectful name that many of them were wont to speak of Samuel Duckett, Mus. Doc., and organist of Minchester Cathedral) in favor of a more amiable, more attractive, and possibly more talented professor. Was it his talent or his amiability and his attractiveness that the Honorable Netta appreciated so highly ? My private and regretful conviction was that his talent had very little indeed to do with their intimacy, and I could never get him to express any opinion about her voice or her musical capacity.

"Oh, she pretends to be shy," he would say in answer to my inquiries ; "she declares that I intimidate her, and our lessons usually resolve themselves into performances on my part. I sit down to the piano and show her how things ought to be done, which seems to satisfy her. Sometimes the fat mamma comes in and joins in the applause. Every now and then I sing flat to see whether that will make any difference, but it never does."

It was his custom to speak slightly of the De Farnworths, and to laugh at their ostentation, their vulgarity, and their self-importance ; but it was easy to see that the incense which they perpetually burnt before him had a sweet savor in his nostrils. Mrs. Duckett, who still clung to her idea that he must be a nobleman in disguise, saw in this tendency an additional proof of his high breeding ; but it did not appear to me to indicate that, nor did I quite like the frequent meetings between him and his pupil which took place under my humble roof.

"If this sort of thing is to go on, Amelia," I said to my wife one even-

ing, "I believe it will be my duty to say something to Lord De Farnworth about it. If he chooses to have Vincent up at his place two or three times a week, that is his affair ; but when I find the young people encountering each other here day after day, as if by accident, and when I am scowled at unless I at once get up and leave them in sole possession of my drawing-room, I begin to suspect that all is not as it should be. Nothing can come of it, you may say ; but I am not so sure of that. Anyhow, I don't wish to be mixed up with a possible scandal."

"Samuel," returned Mrs. Duckett in her sternest voice, "do I ever interfere with you in your management of the choir or your selection of church music, or anything else that you understand ? Very well, then ; be good enough to give me credit for knowing something about my own business and for being certainly the very last woman to permit anything in the shape of a scandal to take place in *this* house."

I held my peace — little peace would be mine if I didn't pretty generally hold it — and went my way ; but my opinion remained unaltered. I am, however, free to confess that the *dénouement* which was at hand took me by surprise. I had expected something rather different. Vincent, I should mention, was subject to occasional fits of the deepest despondency and humility — the natural reaction, I suppose, from that buoyant belief in himself and in his glorious future to which I have already alluded. At such times he used to come to me for sympathy and encouragement, and seldom got either ; because I thought it was good for him to realize every now and then what a hard, implacable mistress art is. Well, late one night, after Mrs. Duckett had gone up to bed, he entered my den, where I was smoking just one more pipe, and I perceived at once by the look on his face what he was going to say. He cast himself down in a chair and proceeded to say it all, as he had done more than once before. He was an ass ; he was a failure ; he was no good and never would be any good ;

the best thing he could do was to cut his throat, and so forth, and so forth.

"This," I observed, "means, no doubt, that the second movement of the famous symphony won't go."

It means that, he confessed ; but it also meant that he had lost courage, that he had ceased to believe in his powers, that he saw a long vista of meaningless, purposeless years before him—in short, that if he couldn't have what he wanted and become a musical composer of the first order, he would a great deal rather die than live. "Upon my word and honor," he concluded, "I believe this is the truth of it. Exertion of the highest powers that we possess is so painful to us poor devils of human beings that we can't bring ourselves to face it without being spurred on by sheer terror of famine. One ought to be forced to work for one's bread day by day, like Schubert."

"Schubert would never have written some of the trivial stuff that he did write if he had been in easier circumstances," I remarked. "Still, so far as I can see, you are not likely to be deprived of the wholesome stimulus that you mention yet awhile."

"Yes, I am," he returned curtly ; "I am going to marry Netta Thrupp."

I opened my mouth so wide that my pipe dropped out of it. "Do you mean to tell me," I asked, "that her parents have given their consent to anything so—so amazing?"

"They haven't had time to give or refuse it yet," he answered coolly ; "she and I only came to an understanding this afternoon. But they won't refuse ; she can do anything she likes with them."

Within limits, that was probably the case ; but that they would ever sanction a union between their only child (upon whose beetle brows a ducal coronet might not unreasonably have been expected to descend) and an obscure music master, whose very origin was unknown, was more than I could believe. However, Vincent entertained no misgivings upon the subject.

"It is just possible," he remarked disdainfully, "that they may begin by

raising objections ; but I shall leave Netta to bring them to their bearings. After all, it is an honor that I am doing them. Surely you don't rank Beethoven or Mozart below a successful distiller of spirits !"

I made so bold as to point out that he was not yet Beethoven or Mozart. "Besides," I added, "I thought you were going to be a miserable failure, and that self-destruction was the only course left open to you."

He burst out laughing. "Can't you understand that one must have one's ups and downs?" he asked. "Men of genius are always like that. But then you aren't a man of genius, you dear old literal interpreter of your fellow-creatures and all their works !"

"Perhaps not," I returned, slightly nettled ; "but I understand something about my craft, at any rate, if I don't understand all the vagaries of people who fancy themselves geniuses ; and I would a good deal rather be what I am, let me tell you, than the tame musical pet of a crew of fashionable ladies—which is all that you are ever likely to be."

I must say for Vincent that he never resented my rudeness. He laughed again, patted me on the shoulder, said I mustn't lose my temper over it, and confessed that he had no business to speak of me otherwise than as his superior. In the end he coaxed me into admitting that I believed in his genius. For the matter of that, I did believe in it, and I do still, though it is out of my power to give convincing reasons for my belief.

It was equally out of my power to discover what his real sentiments were with regard to Miss Thrupp. He asked me whether I did not consider her beautiful, clever, and fascinating, and when I replied that, candidly speaking, I did not, he merely observed that there was room in the world for every variety of taste and proceeded to make irrelevant remarks about the fascinations of Mrs. Duckett, which he chose to assume that I must find irresistible. As for the strenuous opposition on the part of her parents which I foresaw, he

utterly declined to believe in it. Netta would very soon make that all right, he declared.

Netta's determination to have her own way did not, however, prevent Lord De Farnworth from bouncing in upon me on the following morning, grunting and gobbling, like an angry little Berkshire pig (which animal, indeed, he closely resembled in features and outline), to ask who the devil Mr. Vincent was, what the devil I meant by allowing my house to be used as a place of assignation, whether I was aware that a word from him would suffice to deprive me of my present post and its emoluments, etc., etc.

I replied that I was unaware of the existence of any such despotic authority as his lordship claimed, while my own domestic despotism was not firmly enough established to admit of my turning out of my house a young lady who saw fit to enter it, uninvited. I added that I could not tell him who the devil Mr. Vincent was, and suggested that he should apply for information to the person chiefly concerned.

"But, confound the fellow! he won't say," cried the irate little nobleman. "All I can get out of him is that he is a gentleman and that he is going to be famous some fine day. Famous indeed! — infamous is what I call him! Infamous is the only word to apply to such conduct as his has been, and I defy you to deny it, Dr. Duckett!"

Well, there was not much use in defying me, and so, I suppose, he must have perceived; for, after a time, his wrath died away into almost lachrymose lamentations. Such kindness as he and Lady De Farnworth had shown to this out-at-elbows singing master! — such consideration as they had displayed for him, treating him quite as if he had been one of themselves, putting up with his insolent airs and allowing him to thump the piano for a couple of hours without ceasing after dinner, though the noise had often been most distracting. And now this was their reward! It was enough to make a benevolent man despair of the human race. It was also enough to

make an indulgent father repent bitterly of the indulgence which he had lavished upon an undutiful child.

But it was not enough — that very soon became evident — to reduce an undutiful child to a proper state of subjection. When Lord De Farnworth swore that he would never — no, never! — permit his daughter to marry a man who refused to give any account of himself, when he vowed that a well-authenticated statement of her suitor's birth and parentage must and should be a *sine quâ non*, and when he pathetically besought me to say whether I thought it at all possible that Vincent could be some aristocratic personage, masquerading for his own purposes as a pauper musician, I saw that I was in the presence of an already defeated man. He was afraid, no doubt, that the girl would elope, and no doubt she was quite capable of so doing. I could only answer that I was without information, and even without definite opinions, as to the subject of his inquiry. Vincent might be a duke in disguise, or he might be the son of a shopkeeper; but, upon the whole, the latter hypothesis seemed rather more reasonable than the former. And so poor Lord De Farnworth went groaning away.

Being constitutionally unimaginative, I was not half so much disappointed as Mrs. Duckett was when it turned out that the belongings of our mysterious friend were perfectly commonplace and respectable, after all. He was, it appeared, nothing more romantic or more interesting than the orphan nephew of a well-to-do Liverpool merchant, by whom he had been adopted and educated, and with whom he had quarrelled because the Liverpool merchant's soul refused to soar beyond the limits of the counting-house. His real name was Vincent Cunliffe, and his uncle was head of the well-known firm of Cunliffe & Co., who dealt in — I forget what article of commerce. The old gentleman, on being informed that Vincent despised commerce and proposed to go forth into a world which he expected shortly to electrify by the

exercise of his musical talents, had told him to go to the deuce, if he liked. He had accordingly betaken himself to Minchester—though not, it may be hoped, in literal obedience to the above gracious injunction. These particulars we ascertained from Vincent himself, who mentioned that he had had to communicate them to the De Farnworths.

"It would hardly have done for me to be married under a feigned name, you see," he explained; "and I had no special motive for concealment. My uncle, of course, is delighted, and has come over to Farnworth, post-haste, to embrace the bride-elect and to say how liberal he is disposed to be in the matter of settlements. They must manage all that amongst themselves; it doesn't in the least interest me, so long as I am allowed to live my own life and so long as it is understood that I will have nothing to do with a mercantile career."

"And Lord and Lady De Farnworth?" I ventured to inquire. "Are they as delighted as your uncle?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Not quite, I believe," he answered; "but they are probably of opinion that things might have been worse, and it has been some consolation to them to hear that my mother was highly connected. One can't expect such people to understand what emperors and kings have always understood, that the only real aristocracy is the aristocracy of talent."

I had not been previously aware that the royal personages alluded to held that view; but it was, perhaps, just as well that Mr. Vincent Cunliffe did; for, under all the circumstances, arrogance was more likely to serve his turn than humility. Evidently Miss Netta's vast wealth, actual and prospective, was a matter of no moment to him, nor could I divine what his motive was for marrying her. Yet it may be that that motive was not so very far to seek. The girl had fallen over head and ears in love with him—had even, I dare say, gone the length of proposing to him, and his queer, unaccountable

vanity had been unable to hold out against the compliment.

His vanity should have been, and very likely was, highly flattered by the attentions which were showered upon him from all quarters when the engagement was publicly announced. I believe I have already mentioned that the ladies of Minchester were inclined to look upon him with a favoring eye; as soon as they heard of his extraordinary good fortune, and as soon as they had become convinced, by consulting books of reference, that his maternal grandfather had really been in the peerage, they hardly knew how to make enough of him. Still they did their best, and such of them as had daughters of their own tried not to show how vexed they were with themselves for having hitherto failed to divine his social position. As for Miss Netta, she was as proud of her conquest as if the man had actually been what he was so fond of asserting that he was going to be. Few people value themselves upon what has always been theirs, and possibly the pinnacle on which she stood as an heiress of the first water may have seemed to her to be a less exalted one than it did to others. Anyhow, she adored him undisguisedly and a trifle noisily (for it was her nature to make a noise about everything), while he accepted her homage with a good-humored toleration which sometimes made me feel that it would do him no great harm to be gently kicked.

This state of things lasted for about ten days, at the expiration of which time my young friend astounded me by walking into my room one evening, and saying curtly, "Well, it's all off."

"What is all off?" I asked. "Surely you don't mean your marriage?"

"That's just what I do mean. There's a fine fuss up at Farnworth, as you may imagine; but really I can't help it. I had to tell Netta last night that the thing was utterly out of the question. My dear sir, did you ever hear her sing?"

"Of course I have heard her sing,"

I answered. "So have you, I presume, as you have been her singing master all this time."

"No; not more than a few notes. She always put me off, upon one pretext or another, and, indeed, I wasn't very anxious to hear her, suspecting that it would hardly be a treat. But last night, after dinner, she was pleased to favor the company, and—oh, Lord! I must say that I think you might have warned me! How could you ever have supposed that it would be possible for me to live in the house with such a woman? The mercy is that I have found her out in time; for, as I said to her, nothing could have come of our marriage but a speedy and final separation."

Preposterous though this was, he was perfectly in earnest, and my representations did not avail to shake his resolution for a moment. No doubt, he agreed, an arrangement might have been made by which his wife should bind herself never to sing again; but that would not have satisfied him. The terrible thing was that she should be capable of making those atrocious noises and liking them. It showed such a perverted intelligence, such utter inability to distinguish between right and wrong, that he shuddered still at the thought of what he had escaped.

"Moreover," he added, with a slight laugh, "she was much too furious to come to terms, and so were her people. Lord De Farnworth has expelled me with ignominy from the halls of his posterity, and my uncle swears he will never speak to me again. I stand before you, my dear Dr. Duckett, penniless, but free."

Must I confess that I inwardly respected this madman, while verbally condemning his conduct in the most forcible language that I could lay my tongue to? It is necessary, perhaps, to be a musician in order to understand exactly how I felt and how thoroughly I could sympathize with the sudden aversion which he had conceived for the Honorable Netta; but anybody can admire disinterestedness, and everybody must acknowledge that Vincent

Cunliffe had shown himself superior to those sordid considerations which sway the vast majority of mankind. I did not, however, allow him to suppose that I sympathized with him in the least. On the contrary, I told him that he had behaved not only like a fool but very unlike a gentleman, and that it was his bounden duty to make such reparation as he had it in his power to make without an instant's delay.

He smiled, shook his head, and inquired, pertinently enough, what reparation he had it in his power to make. He was sorry to have put anybody to inconvenience, but he was not going to marry the girl, and, as he was not going to marry her, there was nothing more to be said. The prospect of being cut off by his uncle did not appear to alarm him much. He had made up his mind a long time ago, he said, that he would have to dispense with his uncle's patronage and pecuniary aid. And, indeed, it was only too true that these somewhat necessary benefits were to be denied to him. Walking homewards from the cathedral, after service that afternoon, I was accosted by an angry old gentleman with a red face and a white beard, who introduced himself as Mr. Cunliffe, and stated that he wished to caution me against advancing money to that rascally young nephew of his.

"He is sure to ask you for money," Mr. Cunliffe said; "he has no conscience about such matters—or about any other matters either, as far as that goes. Well, you have chosen to take him up, and you can do as you please about helping him. Only be so good as to understand, once for all, that no loan made to him will ever be repaid by me. No man can say that I have not done my duty, and a great deal more than my duty, by that conceited, ungrateful young puppy. Now let him starve, since he prefers to starve! I wash my hands of him—I wash my hands of him, sir!"

Mr. Cunliffe's hands looked as if they would not be the worse for a little washing; but that is neither here nor there. I thanked him for his friendly

warning and wished him good-afternoon without waiting to hear the indignant denunciation which I saw that he was anxious to pronounce. What would have been the use of further words? I could not make Vincent marry Miss Thrupp, nor was I by any means sure that, after the insult to which she had been subjected, Miss Thrupp any longer desired to marry Vincent.

The De Farnworths, as was to be expected, left immediately for London; the rupture caused a nine days' wonder in Minchesteer, and then, if it was not forgotten, it ceased to be so much talked about. Unfortunately, poor Vincent's newly acquired popularity ceased also, and his pupils dropped him as if he had been attacked by leprosy. I dare say the true story of his renunciation did not transpire; I dare say it was generally assumed that something disgraceful had been discovered about him; anyhow he was sent to Coventry, and Coventry is a dismal place of abode for those whose purses are empty. I don't know how he lived during the two months that followed. I was able to provide him with a little work and a very little pay; but I could no longer offer him dinner, for I am sorry to say that Mrs. Duckett declined to meet him, averring that he had deceived her shamefully, and that she had seen through him all along. The two statements sounded irreconcilable; but I know better than to invite my wife to reconcile her statements.

The poor fellow used to come in late at night, bringing his counterpoint to be corrected, and looking paler and more hollow-cheeked as the weeks passed on. It broke my heart to watch him and to listen to the sanguine anticipations of a bright and glorious future which he had in no way abandoned. Sometimes I quite loved Vincent—he seemed to me to be such a true artist, and his musical instincts were so wonderfully sound; but I must own that at other times he tried my patience almost beyond bearing. His moods were at least as irreconcilable as Mrs. Duckett's assertions, and infinitely

more puzzling. He must often, I am sure, have been hungry in those days, and he has occasionally despondent; but, upon the whole, I don't think he was unhappy; there was just that compensating feature in an otherwise melancholy spectacle.

But it fell to my lot to make him unhappy when at length he brought me his famous symphony, and flung the completed score down upon my table, with an exultant air, telling me to glance over it at my leisure. Alas! what could I say when he returned on the morrow to hear my verdict? I did say all that I could; I was able to affirm honestly that he had made great progress, and that certain passages in his work, if rendered as he had apparently intended that they should be rendered, would have rare beauty; but to tell him that such a composition could ever be performed by any orchestra would have been not only dishonest, but downright absurd. I could not have believed that any one could have been thrown into such depths of utter despair by adverse criticism as he was, after hearing me out. What on earth had the man expected? It was beyond me to conjecture; nor did he think it worth while to reply when I put the question to him. He only said, with tears in his eyes, that he now saw the hopelessness of what he had attempted, and that the attempt would not be repeated for many years, if indeed it were ever repeated at all.

"Of course it won't!" I returned rather impatiently—for his dejection struck me as both unmanly and uncalled for. "God bless my soul! did you think you could sit down and write a symphony as easily as a love-letter?"

I am afraid he did write a love-letter that very night—whether easily or not I cannot say. I did not see him again for several days, and then he came in to make what he was pleased to call a final confession to me.

"You have been very kind to me, Dr. Duckett," he began, after declining, with a wave of his hand, the cigar that I offered him; "but there is no

concealing the fact that you despise me. Well, you can't possibly despise me more than I do myself—that's one thing! To mistake yourself for a lion when you are only a poodle-dog, to imagine that you have the world at your feet, when it is really you who are at the feet of the world, which are not even raised to kick so insignificant an atom out of the way—it would be difficult to be more contemptible, wouldn't it? Or do you think that an even lower depth of humiliation might be reached by a man who, having turned his back upon an heiress because she was too unrefined to be tolerated, thought better of it and craved to be taken into her favor again, so that at least her money might save him from the workhouse?"

"Have you done that?" I asked in some astonishment.

"If I had," he answered, with a dreary laugh, "I should have abased myself in vain; for Netta Thrupp is going to be married shortly to Lord—really I forget his title, but no doubt he is a lord of the best quality that can be bought for money; and she particularly wishes it to be understood that nothing except the tedium of life at Farnworth could ever have made her fancy herself in love with a provincial teacher of music. Well, good-bye, Dr. Duckett, and many thanks for all your goodness to me. You couldn't add to it by lending me a few yards of stout cord, I suppose? No? Never mind; one's razors and the river remain."

I let him go, scarcely troubling myself to answer these ravings. I was annoyed with him for being so easily discouraged, and still more annoyed with him for having stooped to renew his courtship of Netta Thrupp. As for his threats of suicide, he had indulged in similar ones so frequently that I attached no importance to them, fully expecting to see him back within twenty-four hours in a more cheerful, though perhaps not much more reasonable, frame of mind.

Well, I was wrong; for I never saw him again alive. He was found dead

in his bed the next morning, with an empty bottle, which had contained some anæsthetic, beside him, and I shall always feel that I was at least as much to blame for his death as the chemist's assistant who got into such trouble at the inquest, though Mrs. Duckett says that is very great nonsense. What distresses me most, when I think about him, is not the cutting short of a young life—for such calamities are occurring every day, and there is no time to grieve over them—as my strong conviction that a great composer was lost to the world when poor Vincent Cunliffe decided, in his dejection and impatience, upon quitting it. This is the only strong conviction that I can hold concerning him, and this, of course, rests upon no solid basis. The effect produced upon me by his character, with all its jarring and discordant elements, was that harmony must have been meant to be evolved, somehow or other, out of those strange dissonances; but the speculation is an idle one, which probably possesses no interest for anybody save myself. Assuredly it has none for the impulsive young woman who once became enamoured of him, and who is now as happy as possible with her title, her diamonds, and her very indulgent husband. "Some day," says Mrs. Duckett, who is nothing, if not orthodox, "all these apparent mysteries will be explained." Perhaps so

W. E. NORRIS.

ORIGINAL.
ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

BY E. L. BULWER.

This popular author has combined in this new work much to interest and excite.—Ernest Maltravers (the hero) was the youngest son of an English gentleman of respectable estates. Every attention was paid to his education; and the child's quick and susceptible genius was rapidly strengthened and beautified. At the age of sixteen he entered the university at Gottingen, and was there distinguished for his superior powers and high attainments—he remained about two years.

The opening scene is laid in a miserable little hovel, a short distance from a road intercepting a wide, barren and desolate common, near a small town in the northern part of England. There are but two occupants. "The one a man of about fifty years, in a squalid and wretched garb, relieved by an affectation of ill-sorted finery. His frame was thin, but broad and sinewy. His countenance was marked by deep furrows, and his grizzled hair waved over a low, rugged and forbidding brow, on which there hung an everlasting frown, that no smile of the lips could chase away. It was a face that spoke of long-continued and hardened vice. The brand of the hangman could not have stamped it more plainly, nor have more unequivocally warned the suspicion of honest or timid men." The other was a girl of fifteen. "Her auburn hair hung in loose and natural curls over her forehead, and its luxuriance was remarkable. Her countenance was beautiful, nay, even faultless, in its small and child-like features, but the expression pained you—it was so vacant.—In repose it was almost the expression of an idiot; but when she spoke, or smiled, or even moved a muscle, the eyes, color, lips, kindled into a life which proved that the intellect was still there, though but imperfectly awakened." Luke Darvil, and Alice, his daughter—the one a hardened villain—the other an innocent girl—the one would not blush at the blackest, bloodiest crime—the other knew not a wicked thought—the one looked upon the rich beauty of his child, and thought of the money he would gain by selling the jewel from the casket—the other trembled at her father's

frown, but comprehended not the depth of his fiendishness. Ernest Maltravers returning home—traveling like a German student, afoot and alone; lost his path, and late at night, rapped at the door of the humble cottage to gain direction. Darvil was at first surly and but little disposed to accommodate the intruding stranger. He spoke of the lateness of the hour—Maltravers took out his watch—the glitter caught the old man's eye, and his nature was suddenly changed. He proposed that the stranger, should rest during the night beneath his poor roof, and that in the morning, he should be conducted on his way. Ernest was about to reject the proposal, but he saw the pretty Alice, and he immediately complied.

"The old man left the room for a supply of fuel.

'Sweetheart' said the traveller, looking round, and satisfying himself that they were alone, 'I should sleep well if I could get one kiss from those coral lips.'

Alice hid her face with her hands.

'Do I vex you?'

'Oh no, sir.'

At this assurance the traveller rose, and approached Alice softly. He drew away her hands from her face, when she said gently, 'Have you much money about you?'

'Oh, the mercenary baggage!' said the traveller to himself; and then replied aloud, 'Why, pretty one? Do you sell your kisses so high then?'

Alice frowned, and tossed the hair from her brow, 'If you have money,' she said in a whisper, 'don't say so to father. Don't sleep if you can help it. I'm afraid—hush—he comes.'

Maltravers had heard enough to be upon his guard. Darvil and his daughter left him to repose by the fire. Alice proceeded to her father's room—showed him that she had detected his designs, and declared that the young stranger should not be injured.—He assured her that he meant to do him no harm. Alice then retired. She had looked upon the noble features of the youth and resolved to save him from the sordid wretch, who never drew back from scenes of blood, when gold was in sight. She retired, but no guardian angel need hover near, to close her silken lashes. She retired to watch a father—nay, to thwart a tiger's leap.

Maltravers remained until all was quiet; then silently arose to depart—approached the door—it was locked—the windows—they were barred. The prison frowned upon him, and his fears told that the hour of execution drew nigh. He frequently heard footsteps; but he was sure to make sufficient noise to convince the night-walker that sleep had not control. At length the door was carefully opened, he started for the struggle—Alice with a noiseless step glided in and stood before him.

"'They are in the shed behind,' she whispered, 'looking for the sledge-hammer; they mean to murder you; get you gone—quick.'

'How? the door is locked.'

'Stay. I have taken the key from his room.' She gained the door, applied the key—the door yielded. The traveller threw his knap-sack once more over his shoulder, and made but one stride to the threshold.—The girl stopped him. 'Don't say anything about it; he is my father—they would hang him.'

'No, no. But you? are safe, I trust; depend on my gratitude. I shall be at **** to-morrow—the best Inn; seek me if you can. Which way now?'

'Keep to the left.'

The stranger was already several paces distant, through the darkness, and in the midst of rain, he fled on with the speed of youth. She lingered an instant, sighed then laughed aloud; closed and rebarred the door, and was creeping back, when from the inner entrance advanced the grim father, and another man of broad, short, sinewy frame; his arms bare, and wielding a large hammer.

'How?' asked the host; 'Alice here, and—hell and the devil, have you let him go?'

'I told you that you should not harm him.'

With a violent oath the ruffian struck his daughter to the ground, sprang over her body, unbarred the door, and, accompanied by his comrade, [Jack Walters] set off in vague pursuit of his intended victim."

The murder-plodding robbers returned without success. Poor Alice was again beat and threatened—the father retired, and the sobbing, trembling girl, delicate in frame—with a mind, by nature kindly suffered to lie dormant—untouched by art—rushed forth from a parents roof, to seek a home—a resting place in the wide, wide world. She met Maltravers. The German student conversed with this beautiful creature, and found her, though she had dwelt for fifteen years in a secluded den of ignorance and of vice, as if fresh from the hands of her Creator. Of all around us, that fill our minds, and occupy our thoughts, she was ignorant. She had never heard even that there was a God. She looked upon the temple dedicated to the worship of the Most High, and her father told her that in it "one man talks nonsense, and the other folks listen to him." They had called her "Idiot." But now her mind began to break forth in strength and beauty, and in its artlessness it seemed worthy of the beautiful fabric that contained it. She looked to the person whose life she had saved, for guidance and protection; and in reply to his questions, as to *what she would like to do*—the innocent novice replied "I should like to live with you sir." The romantic stu-

dent's plan was formed. "He himself would educate this charming girl—he would write fair and heavenly characters upon this blank page—he would act the Saint Preux to this Julia of Nature. Alas, he did not think of the result which the parallel should have suggested."

Maltravers rented a cottage—hired an old woman for a housekeeper, and Alice was his nominal servant. He commenced the duties of teacher, but he could not find sufficient poetry in the A, B, C's to feast his romance, or "perhaps he felt its danger—and fit the bottom of his sparkling dreams and brilliant follies lay a sound, generous, and noble heart." He employed another person to fill his place as teacher; and whiled away his hours in communing with his own thoughts—in wandering about, rejoicing in the beauties of nature; to him beautiful, whether it appeared in a valley of flowers or in a rugged, barren, icy cliff—in composing sonnets, and in solitude, exercising his musical powers. Alice was not pleased with the change of instructors, but yet she was happy, dwelling with the "*beau ideal*" of perfection of her young thoughts. How danced her rapt heart as she gazed upon his proud form. His every word was music to her ear. How quick she caught the rich harmony of sound, as he sung his favorite airs! Maltravers rose early one morning, and was much surprised, and as highly pleased, to hear his own words, and own music, in the low sweet voice of "his discarded pupil." A taste and talent were exhibited which he immediately resolved should not remain uncultivated. He again commenced giving lessons—not in the dull first principles of science, but in poetry and music; it was congenial to his romantic spirit—it fanned the flames which the arch little God enthroned in his pupil's eyes, had kindled in his breast. Happy months passed by. Ernest and Alice rejoiced in the sunlight of each others smiles. Their hearts were knit together with "bonds of perdurable toughness." But the hour for separation suddenly burst upon them. Maltravers observed in a newspaper, a notice of the dangerous illness of his father—his conscience upbraided him for so long remaining absent from his only, and doating parent. He was fearful that he would be too late, and that ere he could arrive, the spirit would wing its flight. He said a cold farewell, and departed. The blissful hours between Ernest Maltravers and Alice Darvil had closed—and it ever those fond ones are again united; it will be after the anxieties and disappointments of many years have chilled their hearts and blighted their hopes. Ernest frequently wrote to Alice. He sent her money to defray her expenses, and to pay off some bills which he had left unsettled.—The funds were placed into the hands of

the old housekeeper, who in applying various portions as she was directed, was observed by an eager eye, and traced to her dwelling—the following night, the cottage was broke into, and poor Alice was borne away, an unhappy captive, by her detested father and the reckless Walters. Her lover in the mean while was watching over a parents death-bed. He saw the decisive struggle—the cold clay entombed, and immediately returned to his own little home—a home that was so rich in charms and attractions. Alas! he found that it had been left desolate unto him forever. Every measure was taken to reclaim the lost, but all searches proved fruitless. Darvil and Walters had left the neighborhood.

Maltravers mourned over the blighting of his fond hopes. The fair creature that had gladdened his path, had been torn from his embrace, and the beings of his own imaginings became his only associates. He traveled—visited Italy—the charming beauties of that southern clime banished his gloomy thoughts. He confessed love to Madame de St. Ventadour. His affection was returned; but with all her cheering, fascinating smiles she was no coquette—she possessed a pure and noble heart; and her words to the young English wanderer, tho' they doomed an immediate separation, did much to raise in his opinion herself and her sex. He returned to his native land—became a successful author—was passionately beloved by the daughter of an English nobleman—a great heiress, but whose worldly possessions were far inferior to her personal charms—she became his betrothed. A letter that he had written was garbled so as to prove him insincere and false, and shown to her. She adored him, but the proud Florence Lascelles, whose hand had been sought by the noblest spirits of England's boast, could not submit to an indifference upon the part of him, to whom she was ready to relinquish her all. Upon their next meeting, without making any explanation, she reproached and repulsed him, and with haughty dignity declared that the *tie was broken*. Lady Florence had loved too deeply to return to the gay world and forget the past. All of her happy dreams were dissipated—her "airy palaces" felled—her hopes were gone. The bright world was but a desert waste; and though the villany was detected, and her lover stood forth the noble one she had deemed him, she could not survive the wreck of her short despair. The "pale messenger" came and stamped his impress on her features. Again Maltravers mourned over the disappointments of love; and again

"Travel came, and took him where he wished."

But, Alice Darvil, that luckless daughter of woe. "Along her path, poetry shed no flowers." "On the beaten and rugged high-

ways of common life, with a weary heart, and with bleeding feet, she went her melancholy course." The father cherished the basest intentions; would have forced her to the lowest degradation, and smiled at her misery, if it would but replenish his purse for a night's carousal. But it was not permitted him to blight the fair flower. In a fit of his intoxication she escaped him. But scantily clothed to protect her against the inclemency of the weather, alone she wandered, and begged the bread that sustained a life which promised but little of its sweets. She gave birth to a daughter. And in remembrance of her first and only love—of a folly, she had been too ignorant to deem a sin—she cherished her child. She watched over it with the "increased devotion of a mother's heart." She was not doomed long to wander, begging a humble pittance at lordly gates. Charity kindly stretched forth her hand. She was assisted in improving her knowledge of music. She became a teacher, and was enabled to support herself and daughter with respectability. She was called Mrs. Butler, the assumed and only name by which she had known her lover. The change was the device of her protectors; for herself, she wished no change, she had ever clung to "sweetness, guileless truth." Her fondest hopes were that she might meet the father of her child. She met him. He was kneeling at the feet of an Italian beauty. She saw, but was not seen—there was no need of a disclosure. She married Mr. Templeton, an old widower and wealthy banker. She was gloomy and unhappy. Her brightest moments were in reading the works of Ernest Maltravers; they breathed of the same lofty spirit that had captivated her young heart. Mr. and Mrs. Templeton became Lord and Lady Vargrave; but while the long sought title sat new upon the old man, the destroying angel swept by, and his honors and his titles—his lands and his teneaments had descended to his heir. The heir was Lumley Ferres, and Maltravers' daughter was his betrothed. He was an *Iago* with his villainies locked up from the gaze of the world. Thus closes the two volumes. The author promises soon to gratify those who "desire to know more of the various characters which have breathed and moved throughout the history." In fulfilling this promise, it is to be hoped that he will change the moral. "The affliction of the good, the triumph of the unprincipled" should be "rare in novels," and it is not administering to the gratification of an enlightened public, to suffer such a character as Alice Darvil—"created" from such "exquisite" "materials of innocence, that sin itself could not mar" them—to pass through life with the tear ever glistening in her eye; while in contrast, is displayed a character like Lumley Ferres, with his "manners of wax" and "heart of stone," triumphing in his every scheme, and detected in none of his villainies; passing through life without even receiving the upbraidings of a conscience which nature's god would never suffer to sleep. It would be much better for Bulwer to search the pages of our historians for another Rienzi—to again re-people some ancient city of the dead, or, to again wander with Pilgrims upon the Rhine.

J. S. R.

FIRST LOVE.

BY ANNE WHARTON.

"FOR him

This young heart beat with its first wild passion,
That pure feeling life only once may know."

"WHY are you so sad, Madelon?"

"Sad! No, I am not sad. What cause have I for sadness?"

"You left the dance suddenly, and the company are inquiring for you."

"I will return with you. I did not feel well—the heat of the room caused me to retire, but I will return with you to the company."

The speakers were two young girls, one of whom was just upon the verge of womanhood, a fair and graceful being, with a heart susceptible of the tenderest emotions. That heart had on that night been first awakened to love. In the gay companions of the dance Madelon had looked with admiration upon a fair young man, and he, enchanted by the spells which her beauty threw around, whispered sweet words in her fascinated ear, till overpowered by the new delight, she had retired to reflect upon it, and to endeavor to regain composure.

She had remained apart from the dancers, and alone for nearly an hour, when her absence was noticed, and her sister Genevieve was sent in quest of her, when the enrapt one was found seated at the casement of her chamber, looking out upon the starry sky, so clearly, deeply beautifully blue, in entranced delight, when the conversation occurred as above described.

Madelon returned with her sister to the saloon, and again was Ferdinand St. Marc at her side, and again was the incense of the heart's affection offered at her beauty's shrine. The lover proffered, in his rapture, heart, fortune, soul; and the ingenuous girl, pleased with the devotion of her lover, accepted his overtures, and with a look told him that he was beloved.

There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the first awakening of love in a generous heart: the feeling by which that heart is pervaded partakes of the celestial character, it is for the time elevated above humanity, it reposes in a heaven of its own creation, and all its thoughts are pure and virtuous and holy; there is no selfishness in first love, it cares not for itself, its regard is for the object beloved, it believes that it will be gifted with superior happiness to what is found in the world, it sets for itself tasks the most generous and good, it looks forward to bliss—pure, celestial bliss—assured of its power to make the world a paradise, and itself the object beloved, the presiding spirit therein. Such is

first love—beautiful first love!—when the heart is warm and young, all truth, and innocence, and virtue. Oh! that we could keep the heart in this purity and innocence, to make this world the very heaven it is pictured there. But we are heirs to the infirmities of humanity, and our sorrows tread upon the heels of our joys. We make virtuous resolutions, and find how vain is human resolution; we see the way and know the road to happiness, but our passions, fearful ministers, draw us away, and with every wish and desire to progress in virtue and peace and bliss, we turn away and fall to wretchedness and despair.

And Madelon, on the first awakening of love's delightful dream, was happy—none so blest as she. Generous and good as was her own nature, she did not entertain a thought of the unworthiness of others, and she gave up her whole good and innocent heart to one to whom female conquests were familiar, and who courted her only for the sake of adding to his triumphs.

Ferdinand St. Marc became a frequent visitor at the house of Madelon's parents, and as each day seemed to bring out fresh traits of merit in his character, so each day did the affection of Madelon increase. And she at length loved him with a woman's wild idolatry, with that deep, deathless passion, "life only once may know." For the time Madelon lived in a world of bliss; she beheld him whom she adored, him whom of all others in the world she most regarded, him whose presence gave peace and joy and happiness to her young heart, and in whose absence her life was a blank, constantly near her; and while passion glanced from his large black eyes, the words of eternal love came, like sweet music, from his lips, to the ears of the gentle maid.

But as the bright summer time passed away, so passed the love of Ferdinand St. Marc; the leaves and the flowers decayed, and with them perished the affections of him who had ensnared the heart of Madelon. The young and fragile thing was left alone to sorrow, and her tears. "A woman can but weep." Ferdinand was a gay, thoughtless fellow, a spendthrift and gambler; his disposition was good, but his passions mastered him; he constantly made virtuous resolutions, and as frequently broke them. When he first beheld Madelon, he thought it possible that he could love her, and remain attached to her alone, forever. But the novelty of the attachment being gone, the heart of the lover took wing; and at length the discovery was made by Madelon that he was offering his addresses to another.

The discovery came like a thunderbolt upon

the heart of Madelon; in the full tide of her happiness she was dashed down to utter misery; from the bliss of knowing that she was beloved, she fell to the wretchedness and despair of desertion by the one beloved. Who can paint the bitter, wasting agony the young heart feels, when having been thus lured to the highest pinnacle of bliss, it is rudely cast into dust? We talk of breaking hearts, but hearts do not suddenly break; ages of pain, of withering pain, roll over the victim's head, ere the heartstrings yield: years of misery are experienced in a day; the day thoughts are troubled, and the dreams of the night are fraught with horrid fancies. There are no words to tell this misery of the heart—of the heart of poor, weak, fragile woman;—woman, tenderest of earth's creatures, created for the gentlest offices of life—for joy, and peace, and happiness. Woman endures this wretchedness, and the world passes her by, careless and heedless of her sufferings, which she hides while the power of concealment lasts; torturing herself to avoid the snares of the unfeeling, until the last hour of suffering comes, and the heart breaks, and the gentle victim lies at peace, under the green turf, with the myriad dead.

And poor Madelon was deserted. They tried to comfort her. But what consolation could the kind voices of others afford? There was one who could have restored her to herself again, but he was far away, and all other voices failed to bring a smile upon her white cheek. Days, weeks, passed on, and Madelon grew weaker and paler every day; friends gathered round her, and every artifice was tried to recover her, but in vain; the bolt had struck deep into her heart, and it seemed that she would awaken to happiness again only where "the hearts of all are known, and the faithful love is blest."

And they said that Madelon was dying. The spring time had come again, and the birds sang sweet melodies in the jessamine boughs under her chamber window, and the incense of sweet flowers was breeze-wafted into the room, and the sunlight conspired to make all glad, save Madelon. Nor birds, nor flowers, nor sunlight revived her drooping heart. And many tears were shed for Madelon, but she was composed and resigned; she felt that there was one living being in the world who could save her from an early grave, but she knew she would never see him again; one word might restore her—but she knew that that word could not be spoken, and she was resigned to her fate.

It was a bright and beautiful morning when Madelon sat in the midst of her family, calmly awaiting the hour of dissolution; when she was

observed to start wildly, and her father rushed in alarm toward her; but she made a sign for him to be silent, and bent her head forward, as if eagerly listening. But nothing was heard save the sighing of the breeze through the tendrils of the jessamine, which overhung the chamber window, and Madelon passed her hand in disappointment over her brow, and resumed her previous attitude. "It was a wild and silly fancy, father," she exclaimed, "I was foolish to entertain the thought for a moment."

A pause ensued. It was broken by a voice, heard by all present, inquiring for Madelon's father. The dying girl screamed with delight, and rushing toward the window, fell fainting before she could reach it.

It was Ferdinand's voice? The father proceeded to meet him. He had awakened to a sense of his errors, and his heart reverting to the gentle Madelon, he had come to supplicate forgiveness, and to ask her to become his bride. The father of Madelon joyfully welcomed the penitent, and instantly accompanied him to Madelon's chamber. But, alas! there she lay upon the ground, pale, and to all appearance, lifeless; while every exertion was being made to effect her recovery. Those exertions were not made in vain. The maiden opened her clear blue eyes, and glanced inquiringly at all those who stood around her. Ferdinand had been purposely kept back. "'Twas but a dream, then?" she murmured, "too happy for reality."

"Say it was *not* a dream, dear Madelon?" returned her sisterly, tenderly.

"Do not—do not deceive me," cried the girl, catching eagerly at her sister's words, "do not deceive me—is it he?—is he here?—keep me no longer in suspense—am I to live or die?"

"Madelon!"

"Ah!" shrieked the maiden, "'tis no delusion: it is his voice!—he is here!"

"Madelon, dearest Madelon!" exclaimed the lover.

The next moment Madelon was locked in Ferdinand's arms.

And ere the bright summer ended, a gay marriage procession was beheld approaching the little village church, and Madelon restored to health and happiness, became the bride of her heart's first and only love.

HER ITALIAN PRINCE

BY

MRS. JOHN VAN VORST

Author of "Babsby's Daughter," "Second Quality," etc.

I.

BEFORE the entrance of the Hotel Meurice a neat little railway omnibus, with a gigantic load of American trunks which swayed to the rhythm of the tinkling bells attached to the horses' throats, drew up and halted, and from within Hal Mumford tumbled, rather than stepped, out upon the Paris pavement.

He had been abandoned at the station by the feminine members of the party.

"Hal dear, be an angel, and see the trunks through the customs. Lillie and I are simply famished for tea." And then, with a parting wave of the hand, which forestalled all objections on Mumford's part, a final "You'll find us at the hotel."

Messages of this sort from his wife Mumford considered as commands. But the present holiday was not unmingled with protest. Inward protest, to be sure; and as though in league to legitimise his objections against coming abroad when he knew he could n't afford it, Fate had bobbed up at every turning with an obstacle which seemed to call out: "I told you so!"

From the moment Hal Mumford had seen his last of Broadway—he had taken a long parting glance through the tiny window at the back of the big landau which carried them down to the ship—he had been

growing steadily more and more wretched. Those eight days at sea—"Water, water everywhere." . . . He could put up with the "not a drop to drink" part, but there were the other complications, the ups and downs, worse than any stormy day on the Exchange.

Ugh! The very ground of Paris, upon which he now descended, seemed to rise and sink beneath him. The lonely arcades of the Rue de Rivoli suggested the ship's decks. Mumford pulled a handful of change from his trousers pocket and handed it to the cabman.

"Take whatever you like," he said to the astonished Frenchman. "I've got to get on land, or I'll be done for;" and, with a flourish of his coat-tails, he plunged into the Hotel Meurice.

The discussion with the customs officers, the drive across Paris from the station to the hotel, had taken Mumford longer than he expected. When he had been ushered by a groom in buttons to the parlor reserved on the register under his name, and where he expected to find his wife and Lillie Morse, two empty teacups stood on a tray which encumbered the centre table. This was his only greeting.

"Jennie," Mumford murmured gently—the pet name which he called his wife at the peculiar moments when, slightly angry himself, he yet recognized that the "best way out of it" would be by an apology to Virginia. "Jennie," he called again, and then in a louder tone: "Virginia!" And more dictatorial: "Virginia Mumford!"

This last brought from an adjoining bedroom Mrs. Mumford's maid.

"Oh, *Monsieur* have come!" she exclaimed. "The trunks, are they here?"

"Bother the trunks!" Mumford muttered. "Where's Mrs. Mumford?"

"Oh!" the little French maid exclaimed. "*Madame* has gone out with Miss Morse. She say it gets so late. Just time to do a few purchases before dinner."

Mumford sank back on the little red damask sofa.

"Shopping! She's gone to *shop*!"

Just then, the floor giving one of its fearful reminiscent lurches, Mumford roared out to the maid:

"Here, Eugénie—you speak French. Order me a whiskey and soda. Tell 'em to bring it quick. The ship's rocking like mad!"

But when the white panel of the door echoed to a rat-tat a moment later, it was not Mumford's whiskey and soda, but a tall, handsome, very evidently American man, young, clean-shaven, dressed to perfection, and far more good-looking than anything Mumford had seen since he reached France. The young man paused on the threshold, hesitating; then he said:

"Is this Mrs. Mumford's apartment?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it's hers," Mumford groaned. "I'm Mr. Mumford—Mrs. Mumford's husband." He laughed.

The American in turn presented himself.

"I'm Mr. Bedford—Alonzo Bedford. I came to ask if Miss Morse—Miss Lillie Morse—is here. I know she was to come with Mrs. Mumford."

Hal Mumford looked with new interest at the handsome American. The whiskey and soda now arrived, and he offered a drink to his compatriot.

"Why, yes," Mumford said, when his throat was free of the agreeable and restorative sensation of Schweppes and Scotch; "Miss Morse came over with us. She decided at the very last moment to join my wife."

"You came on the *Kaiser Wilhelm*, did n't you?" Bedford asked.

"Yes." Mumford took another long draught. "Just landed to-day."

Mr. Bedford hesitated. "I suppose Mrs. Mumford and Miss Morse came on with you from Cherbourg?"

"Oh, dear me, yes, of course. But they've been here two hours. Now, look here, Mr. Bedford, what does any self-respecting American woman who's been two hours in Paris do?"

Bedford laughed.

"I understand," he said. "Shopping."

"Well, of course," Mumford murmured out of the huge glass where his nose was buried; and then, not without purpose, he added: "Lillie Morse is a mighty fine girl. I'm awfully glad she came along. I don't know how well you're acquainted with her?"

Bedford interrupted hastily:

"I've known her not quite a year. But since I met her the first time in New York I've had no thought for any one else. You may find me too frank?"

Mumford shook his head vigorously, and, after a pause, he asked: "Does Lillie Morse know what your feelings are for her?"

"Yes," Bedford assented. "That is, yes and no. I suppose I made an ass of myself. Men in love always do. The second time I saw her I asked her to marry me."

Mumford gave a low whistle.

"Must n't rush things if you want them to turn your way."

He was glad, in the absence of his wife, and in his general feelings of misery, to have an American fellow-citizen to talk with. Tactfully, in the hope of retaining his visitor, he chatted on upon the one subject that could be of any real interest to him, and Bedford, impressed by the brusque frankness of his new-made friend, asked:

"How do you mean I must n't rush things?"

"Got plenty of money?" Mumford questioned.

"Yes, I suppose you might call it plenty."

"Well, then, go easy. Miss Morse has just arrived. You've come to call on her five minutes after she lands. That's all right to begin with. She knows you've cared for her, since you asked her to marry you at the start. But she doesn't know what your feelings are now. She's in a vague kind of uncertainty. You call; immediately she concludes: 'Bedford's as crazy as ever about me.'"

"And I am!" Bedford put in ardently.

"Yes, but that's not the question. Just being crazy about a girl is n't going to win her. On the contrary. What you want is to make her yours, is n't it?"

Bedford nodded a prolonged and emphatic nod.

"Well, then, when she comes in presently—for I suppose even shopping must have an end—you explain to her that you have dropped in to call at once because you're going away. Do you understand? Leaving Paris; a farewell call."

"But why?" Bedford protested. "Just as she's arriving?"

"That's the whole point," Mumford chuckled. "If you stay on, hanging around, you're too easy game. If you come for a good-by visit, she'll be absorbed in you. . . . 'What! Bedford *leaving* just as I *get* to Paris?'" Mumford mimicked Lillie's astonishment. "'Why, the idea! Then he—— Oh, that can't be possible! He was madly in love with me. Could it be that somebody else——' Ah, there's the gist of the whole matter! Just a touch of jealousy starts the whole field into action."

Bedford meditated. But his meditations were interrupted by the brusque entrance of Mrs. Mumford and his beloved, Lillie Morse.

There was a moment of bedlam: Lillie astonished at Bedford's knowing Mumford; Mrs. Mumford amazed that Hal should have returned so soon from the station; Hal apologetic; Bedford all eyes for the lovely apparition which for so long his eyes had coveted.

Then in a sudden pause Hal heard Lillie asking Bedford:

"If you are settled in Paris, we shall see you often. We are going to spend the winter here."

Bedford gave one glance at his new-made friend. Then he answered like a man:

"I am, as they say here, installed in Paris, but, unfortunately, I'm leaving town in a few days, to be gone a month or two."

Lillie Morse's astonishment was evident, and there was a slightly icy tone in the little "Oh!" she pronounced. With an irony that was balm to Bedford she answered:

"We shan't see you again?"

"Oh, yes, if you have a moment during the next few days."

Lillie Morse looked at Mrs. Mumford, who, rising to the occasion, proposed:

"Why don't you join us to-morrow at one o'clock for lunch at Paillard's?"

"At one o'clock?" Bedford nodded. "I should be delighted." And, to the increasing amazement of Miss Morse, he took leave, professing some engagement for dinner which caused him to be in haste.

Overjoyed with the success of his little scheme, Mumford determined secretly to announce to Virginia the same sudden leave of absence for himself. But, with a pang of remorse, no doubt, at her first burst of extravagance in her recent round of shopping, Virginia was very tender with her husband. Putting her arms about him, as soon as Lillie had left them alone, she told him, all in a breath, how much she loved him, and how irresistible Paris is to the woman who really has good taste.

II.

"I KNEW he cared for me. I was perfectly sure of it. Virginia, wake up!"

It was Lillie Morse who had fluttered into Mrs. Mumford's room at an early hour, a small sheet of letter-paper held tightly between her thumb and forefinger, and a somewhat triumphant expression on her charming face. Her subtle smile seemed to prolong the reflections of a perfect pink *peignoir* in the tones of the dawn itself.

Mrs. Mumford evidently took it for the aurora. She turned upon her pillow, frowned with resentment at the early intruder, who pulled the curtains aside, letting a flood of light in upon Virginia's sleepy eyes, and then dragged up a chair and sat down by the bedside.

"Wake up, Virginia! You've had the whole night for rest, and I simply must let off steam to some one. We're in Paris, to begin with. Does n't that excite you in the least bit?"

Virginia groaned a drowsy "I've been here too often to thrill."

"Just look, though!" Lillie cried.

Virginia lifted her head and turned it in the direction of the window, through which she could perceive, dull as she was, the enchanting winter silhouettes of the vast elm-trees in the gardens of the Tuileries.

"Ugh!" she shuddered, drawing the covers more closely about her. "I hate Paris in cold weather. It's so gray and misty."

"You're no artist," Miss Morse declared, and she became pensive.

Wrung from her indifference by Lillie's dreamy mood, Mrs. Mumford drew herself up on her arm, looked Lillie well over, and with a woman's penetration asked:

"Well, what's the letter you've brought in to read to me?"

Lillie flushed pink, more pink than the rose of her dressing-gown, and nonchalantly, now that the conversation had taken the desired turn, she said:

"Oh, it's nothing special. I just wanted to tell you that Mr. Bedford has written. He's not quite as *blasé* as I thought, after all. I guess he cares for me still."

"Well, what does he say?" Mrs. Mumford had arranged her pillows and was prepared to listen.

"He wants me to go out this morning somewhere. He says he must have a talk with me before leaving Paris."

"You're not going with him?"

"Yes, of course I am."

"But where, for Heaven's sake, in this freezing gray weather?" Virginia shuddered. "To hover over the register of some empty museum, like the poor Parisian tramps?"

"There are other places besides museums."

"No doubt; but you can scarcely go to the Ritz for tea in the morning."

"Well, where we're going is of no consequence"—Lillie was becoming slightly irritable. "The point was that I thought it might interest you to hear Mr. Bedford had written me. After the cool and haughty way he treated me yesterday, I consider it extremely amusing to get word from him the first thing this morning."

"Oh, men are all alike, and women, too, for that matter. You know what they say about women in France?"

"No. What?"

"That she's like your shadow: you follow her, and she runs away from you; you run away from her, and she follows you."

"I'm not a shadow," Lillie protested; "and Alonzo Bedford can wait a good time before I think it worth while either to follow him or to run from him."

Standing at the threshold of Virginia's room, Lillie made this last remark with conviction. But, once alone, she meditated, wondering whether there were any truth in what she had said. The mirror in which she gazed long after her toilet was made sent back the perfect image of a face dyed crimson when at last Mr. Bedford was announced. Hastily Lillie Morse patted her golden hair as it lay in waves under the meshes of her veil. She pushed her hat more becomingly to one side. She took a final glance, which expressed contentment at her general appearance, and then, with a majestic sweep, she swung into the parlor, and, in spite of her warm, glowing cheeks, she greeted Mr. Bedford like an icicle. She knew inwardly that he was going to propose again, and the only thing to do was to be perfectly calm and perfectly frigid.

But Alonzo had learned his lesson better than Lillie dreamed. His one little conversation with Hal Mumford had sunk deep into his soul, and he was in an "icicle freeze icicle" mood which was bound to rouse Miss Morse.

"I came," he said to her, "at the unearthly hour, or, at least, I wrote asking if I might stop in a moment, before *déjeuner*, because, very unfortunately for me, I can't have the pleasure of lunching with you and the Mumfords at Paillard's."

"What?" Lillie gasped.

"It was rather abrupt of me, I know, to insist upon coming so early."

"Not at all."

He heard the piqued tone of Lillie's voice and was glad.

"I always get up fearfully early in Paris," she went on. "It's such an awfully nervous place. One can't possibly sleep here."

"Exactly," Bedford acquiesced. "My doctor tells me——"

"Doctor? You're not ill, are you?"

"No, no, not ill; merely seedy, as the English say. In need of a change. That's why I'm off to-day."

Lillie started, and Bedford went quietly on:

"The only good express for St. Moritz leaves in the afternoon; and, by the way, I've just about persuaded Mr. Mumford to go with me. He's got the regular New York broker's need of a holiday."

"Well, this is charming, I must say!" Lillie looked directly at Bedford, her clear blue eyes beautiful in their gentle rage. "What does Hal expect Virginia and me to do here, stuck down in the middle of winter in Paris, without a man? What is there left for us to amuse ourselves with, I'd like to know!"

"Why," Bedford ventured, "shopping."

"Shopping? I don't care a bit about the Paris shops. You can get everything you want better in New York, and a thousand times cheaper, besides." Then she added sceptically: "Hal is n't going off to St. Moritz with you, really, is he?"

"He said he would, last night. I left him at about two A.M. at the Chatham, and if he has n't changed his mind since then, we're off together to-day."

"It'll be the first time Hal's ever left Virginia of his own accord." Lillie's tone was astonished. Staring straight at Bedford, her eyes like two lovely liquid pools reflecting the blue sky, she declared: "I don't believe Virginia's going to like this a bit!"

On Miss Morse's entrance that morning, Bedford had perceived with some satisfaction that she was wearing a hat. It was then, probably, her intention to accept the suggestion he had made in his note to her that morning. Letting his eyes wander a moment from

Lillie to the outward scene which was framed as a picture by the long French windows, he asked abruptly:

"What do you say to a turn in the garden before lunch? I can leave you at Paillard's, if you like."

"Oh, I can't possibly stay out as long as that," Lillie protested; "but I don't mind going for just a little walk."

In spite of the raw winter chill, Bedford was wearing no overcoat, and Lillie, remarking upon his hardiness, as though she wished to wrap up for both of them at once, drew her furs closely about her, until the delicate fringes of the silver fox lay against the roses of her cheeks. With her arms plunged almost to the elbow in her generous muff, she turned laughingly to Bedford.

"Not too freezing?"

"Pretty chilly!" Bedford looked at her with a warmth that contradicted his words. "But it's not the weather that I'm complaining of. There are colder things than the north wind driving under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, you know."

Lillie took herself to be the superlative cold to which Bedford alluded, and this first personal note in their conversation gave her happy assurance.

"Why don't we go"—she turned sweetly to Bedford—"and see the house over in the Latin Quarter, where you've been living all winter? I don't mean actually to visit your apartment," she laughed, "but just to stare up at your windows, the way they do before the houses where celebrated people live."

"But I'm not celebrated," Bedford opposed.

"Well, any way, I want to see the place where you've worked so hard that you've got to go to St. Moritz to recuperate. I know the address: Quai Voltaire, No. 9. It was on your letter this morning. It sounds awfully far away. Can we go on foot?"

"It's just across the river there, not more than a ten-minutes walk, if you really insist upon flattering me to such a degree."

A light enveloping mist lay over everything, as if some one had wished to blend man's work with God's, prolong the vast roof-lines of Paris into the sky itself, bringing the clouds down to cling like some delicate veil among the barren branches of trees.

"Practical people call it just plain mist," Bedford laughed, as they paused for a moment on the bridge that spans the Seine beyond the Louvre, and looked up at the sun, which hung like a lantern of chrome on a ground of gray in some Japanese print.

"What do you call it?" Miss Morse asked.

"Oh, I'm a Philistine," Bedford smiled. "I call it 'atmosphere.'"

"That's what the people with artistic temperaments are always looking for, is n't it?" Lillie queried.

"So I've heard. Any way, there's more atmosphere to the square inch in Paris than in any other place I ever visited in my artistic wanderings."

Lillie's eyes had caught the white address on the little plaque of blue which adorned the corner house on the Quai Voltaire.

"This must be it!" she cried. "No. 5, No. 7, No. 9. There's the house. Now, which are your windows?"

"You'll have to stand back if you want to catch sight of my eyrie lodgings. There!" He drew her toward the ramparts which flanked the Quai and against whose sides the book-stalls had unfolded their little green cases, offering marvellous bargains to the amateur of cheap treasures. "There," he said, pointing skyward: "those four little windows on the balcony."

Lillie clung with one hand to her hat while she gazed.

"On the sixth floor?" she asked with astonishment.

Bedford answered her indulgently:

"Yes; the higher up you go, the more atmosphere you get."

Lillie shook back her hat into its most arch position on her crown of golden hair, and then, staring with all the depth of her blue eyes at her companion, with an expression half coquettish, half appealing, she said:

"But if you live as high up as that, I should n't think you'd really have to run off to St. Moritz for altitude."

"Well——" Bedford began.

But his response was broken by a cry from the river below—a wild, strange cry as of some one bidding farewell forever to this world.

Bedford started forward, and Lillie ran on by his side. In a moment they were but two involuntary elements of a crowd that was swarming and pressing forward on the bridge. Bedford, leading the others, flung himself down the flight of stone steps that led from the parapet to the river's edge. Thither, like flocking sheep, followed the crowd, grouping themselves expectant, agonized, cynical, about the little heap of clothes and misery that had been dragged from the river by those whose duty it is to give aid to the drowning. Lillie, stirred, tremulous, watching intense, saw that a life had been saved, snatched back from the darkness whose oblivion it had sought in the deep moving waters.

Instinctively she leaned against Bedford and whispered with something like awe:

"It's a woman. And she's so young——"

The alarm had been rapid. Rescue was fast upon despair. Scarcely had the color fled from the cheeks of the pale face that lay with eyes closed; the faintest breath parted the lips, whose clear lines denoted, as did the slender body under the clinging folds of its wet garments,

youth, extreme youth. The work of resuscitation was accomplishing its miracles. Eager with an impulsive generosity to do what he could, Bedford questioned the men in uniform who represented the law. The more important of the *sergents de ville* spoke in a low tone, giving directions, which he interrupted for a moment to respond courteously to the American's solicitation.

"It's only another case of disappointed love, no doubt," he declared. "We take an average of two broken hearts a day out of the Seine." Then he added with a more human intonation: "Just the same, it's sad to see so much youth trying to spoil itself. This is not a Parisian girl, either—you can see that. She's one of the poor little victims from the South, whom some *grand seigneur* has made love to, most likely. She's not to be condemned, but to be pitied."

Hearing his words, and understanding in part only, Lillie questioned eagerly:

"But how do you know what she is?"

"Her papers establish her identity. She is from the department of the Alpes Maritimes; Nice, Cannes, and the rest: luxury, frivolity, in other words. We have a wide experience, and this case most evidently is the too usual one of misery and seduction."

They had brought an improvised bed, upon which they now lifted the little burden, so much lighter in reality than the weight that had become for her unbearable. As the procession moved toward the life-saving shelter on the shore of the river, Bedford touched Lillie's arm and led her gently away.

"There's nothing we can do. She's in good hands now."

"Perhaps," Lillie answered in a dreamy tone, "if she really loves some one, she already regrets that she tried to kill herself, and is glad that they saved her."

"I'm awfully sorry," Bedford said, "that we should have seen such a thing. It was my fault. I ought not to have allowed you to follow down those steps."

"Oh, no," Lillie protested. "We might have been of some use, and, besides that, I'm not at all sorry to have seen that poor, tragic face. When you have only read about such things in the newspapers, you can't take them in at all." She did not add that she had put into the hands of the *sergent de ville* a hundred francs, which he was to give the poor *abandonnée* on her awakening.

For a time they walked on in silence, retracing their steps towards the Hotel Meurice. Then, as they turned again into the Rue de Rivoli, Bedford said:

"It was beastly luck that you should have had such an unhappy morning."

"Please don't," Lillie cried. "It was sad, of course. I shall never

forget that wretched little heap of discouraged humanity. But don't regret anything," she added. "It's made me understand things that were like fiction before."

"It could n't make you understand wanting to die for love?" Bedford asked, leaning toward her.

They had come to the entrance of the hotel. Bedford longed to revoke his decision. He wanted to stay by Miss Morse's side indefinitely, forever.

Then other thoughts intruded upon his memory. She was now no doubt in a tender mood, they had passed so near to death; but there was the recollection of her frigid manner as she had greeted him that morning, and still further back in the past stood out the day when Lillie Morse had refused to be Bedford's wife. Moreover, for the moment, he had given himself up to the perhaps mistaken guidance of Hal Mumford. So, lifting his hat and holding it in one hand, he extended the other to Miss Morse, bidding her good-by on the threshold of the Meurice. It was she who paused a moment, nodding as she glanced back at him over her shoulder.

"We shall see you in Paris again, perhaps? In the spring?"

"I hope so, surely," Bedford responded, turning away, down the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli.

III.

At six o'clock the two women sat alone in their hotel *salon*. Hal and Alonzo Bedford had taken the train for St. Moritz.

"It beats anything I ever heard," Virginia Mumford sighed, leaning forward, her elbows on the table, her pretty, jewelled fingers clasped before her.

"It's rather stiff, I must confess," Miss Morse responded, "to be deserted this way by the men. But for Heaven's sake, don't let's be tragic over it. There's only one thing for us to do."

"I'd like to know *what?*" Virginia's tone was despairing.

Lillie drew up her chair to the table, and with the ardor of one evolving some masterly plot, she began:

"We've been marooned in Paris. The only thing for us to do is to abandon Paris."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, to get out of the place as soon as we can."

"But where?"

"To some place more amusing than this. To Monte Carlo, for example."

"Monte Carlo!" Virginia echoed, the very possibilities that name suggested awakening an amused and mischievous expression in her eyes. "We can't go to Monte Carlo all by ourselves!"

"Well, we're two lone women. Whatever we do, we've got to do it by ourselves. So I say: Let's have some fun."

"You don't really mean this?"

"Yes, I do. Monte Carlo's a perfectly respectable place."

Virginia laughed. "It has n't exactly the reputation."

"Well, that depends upon how you act when you get there. The place itself is all right, and it's perfectly decent for two women to stay there alone. They even let a woman entirely by herself go into the gaming-rooms."

"Oh, you would n't go into the Casino!"

"We can see about that when we get there. The point is that we've been abandoned, and we're going to make the best of it."

As if hypnotized by Lillie's decision, Virginia was drawn into the spirit of the sudden move.

"We could n't get off to-night," she shook her head.

"Why not? It's only six o'clock. The express does n't leave until nine."

Springing up, Lillie ran to the door of Mrs. Mumford's room, called the maid, and gave swift orders for a prompt and speedy departure. Virginia, half dazed, followed suit. And when, three hours later, from the wild preparatory confusion, the two ladies with their maid emerged upon the *quai* of the Gare de Lyon, asking for the Côte d'Azur express, they looked outwardly as if they had intended nothing else for days than to leave by this especial train for Monte Carlo. Yet there was a lurking guiltiness in their expressions, mingled with a nervous hilarity, which revealed them to each other as accomplices in the most unexpected and *risqué* adventure.

The train halted and faltered out through the Parisian suburbs, and then, once past Fontainebleau and the most distant environs, it settled down to the rushing, roaring continental pace of the P.L.M., "fastest express in the world."

"Heavens!" Mrs. Mumford exclaimed. "American trains don't go as fast as this, do they?"

"Don't ask me." Lillie Morse shook her head, looking up from the illustrated pages of a French magazine. "When it comes to calculating kilometres and miles in a comparative sweep, I drop out." She again buried her pretty nose in the leaves of the review. And Mrs. Mumford, finding the atmosphere unsociable, got up and ventured out of their compartment into the hall of the corridor train. There, by the big window which was open upon the blank and wintry scene, slightly illuminated by a February moon, she stood gazing outward, wondering why Lillie was suddenly so grumpy, and what Hal would think of this wild escapade.

Virginia Mumford was not a hampered wife. That she perfectly

realized. Hal gave her all the money she could possibly think of using, and he never asked her, as many husbands might, "what she had done with that last hundred." She was free, and yet she had never thought of doing a thing without telling her husband all about it. This was her first adventure, and it was Lillie Morse, the young girl she was chaperoning, who had led her into it. "Pretty sort of chaperon I am!" she concluded. Her eyes followed the fitful restlessness of the fast-flying landscape, pale and shadowy under the winter moon as the train sped on.

But in a moment her attention was diverted.

"Virginia Bell!" She heard her name—her maiden name—pronounced, with an intonation of rejoiced astonishment, and, turning, she cried out:

"Gertie!"

A moment of feminine effusion followed. For an instant two enormous hats concealed under the vast waving of their undulating brims the embrace of two old schoolgirl comrades, who, in their unexpected meeting after many years, recovered through their mutual memories something of the past which is, no matter how distressing, dear to every woman's heart.

"Whoever would have thought of finding you here!"

Mrs. Mumford smiled, and her new-found companion drew her into the compartment adjoining that where Lillie Morse, under pretext of reading a French review, was letting her thoughts wander in idle solitude over the incidents of her morning in Paris with Alonzo Bedford.

Sinking down on one of the seats of the *wagon-lit*, Virginia Mumford gazed contentedly at the little bunch of femininity by her side.

"Gertie," she said, "I don't even know your married name."

"Bellamy-Scott," Gertie smilingly responded. "I can't pronounce the usual formal phrase, 'I hope you'll have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Bellamy-Scott,' for, to tell you the truth, we've been separated for almost as many years as we've been married, and that's a goodly number." She laughed, and went gaily on: "Bellamy is a perfect dear. He's one of the nicest men you ever saw. Only, we simply can't hit it off. I'm crazy about him when I'm away from him, and as soon as we're together I'm crazy about getting away again. We were children when we were married. He brought me abroad at once. I've spent twelve years over here. I live in Paris in the autumn and spring, and go south for the winter."

"But, Gertie"—Mrs. Mumford looked with wide-eyed wonder at her old school companion—"Gertie, if you're so dreadfully unhappy, why don't you divorce?"

"Oh!" Mrs. Bellamy-Scott laughed. "How frightfully American

you are still, Virginia! In France you can't imagine anything that is more unworldly—worse taste, in fact—than divorcing."

"But," Virginia Mumford protested, "it's so immoral to stay married to a man you don't love."

"*Petite, petite*"—Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's tone was indulgent—"how American, how provincial, you are! Every situation, my dear, is immoral. One needs only to lead a worldly life for a short time to find that out. But some things are good taste, and some are bad, and the only unpardonable sin in the fashionable world is bad taste." She laughed again, and, springing up from the couch of the *wagon-lit*, she caught in her hands a *bonbonnière* which lay in the rack above her head. Lifting the cover of the little box, she held out to Virginia Mumford an array of candies.

When Virginia had chosen, Mrs. Bellamy-Scott slipped into her mouth a large pink *sucre d'orge* which forced her teeth apart, and, smiling always, she said to Virginia:

"Now my mouth is absolutely full, so you'll have to talk. This is the only way to keep me quiet, by fixing my active jaws upon a sticky bonbon. Go ahead, Virginia. Account for yourself. What have you been doing all these years? You're married, of course?"

"Oh, yes!" Mrs. Mumford cried with decision.

"What sort of a man?"

"A perfect angel."

"Horrible! I hate angels, and especially 'angel men'!"

Mrs. Bellamy-Scott slipped the bonbon into her cheek long enough to give further vent to her antipathy for winged beings. Then she asked: "What are you doing over here? Going to Nice for your health?"

"No"—Virginia shook her head. "We're on the way, Miss Morse and I, to—Monte Carlo." She made a clean breast of it.

"Good!" Mrs. Bellamy-Scott exclaimed. "You have n't got your angel husband with you, have you?"

Virginia again shook her head.

"Well, then, just let me take you in tow. I know everybody who's worth knowing from one end of the Côte d'Azur—or 'Cocotte d'Azur,' as they call it," she whispered—"to the other, and I can give you a heavenly time."

Mrs. Mumford wanted to object that she did n't care for a heavenly time or any other kind of time, when she was without Hal, but she was interrupted in her confessions by Lillie Morse, who had crawled out of her rugs in their compartment, and had come to find out what had become of Virginia. As she stood on the threshold of the railway carriage, Mrs. Mumford beckoned her in and then presented her to Mrs. Bellamy-Scott. After a few minutes' conversation, the

three women parted for the night with promises of meeting again the following morning, on the arrival of the train at Monte Carlo.

It was only twenty-four hours later that Virginia Mumford received from her old school friend a note which read:

MY DEAR VIRGINIA:

I didn't "descend," as they say, at your hotel, because I always avoid, if possible, stopping in a place where I have friends. I don't believe in thrusting myself on people. Marriage proved for me, fast enough, the lassitude of obligation. You think me quite immoral with your deliciously puritan ideas about "angel men." However, dear Virginia, what I'm sending this note for is not to descend upon obligations and privileges, but simply to ask you and Miss Morse to lunch with me at *Ciro's* at one o'clock to-day. You will find Prince Gianotti, Count Marcelin, Baron Strombitz, and Sydney Langfrew, the younger son of an English lord. Do come!

Yours as of old,

GERTIE.

IV.

At one o'clock the little party had assembled at *Ciro's*.

Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's table was reserved, and the deference with which the *maitre d'hôtel* greeted her sufficiently demonstrated the esteem in which this American lady and her millions were held at the most fashionable restaurant in Monte Carlo.

Lillie Morse and Virginia had dressed with scrupulous care. They had spent the morning at their toilet with the genial aid of the little French maid, Eugénie, and when at last they emerged, there was a mutual burst of admiration.

"Virginia!" Lillie cried. "You never looked so well!"

And with a sigh Mrs. Mumford responded:

"Oh, Lillie, I wish I had your figure!"

"Am I good enough for a prince?" Lillie asked.

"It really is rather exciting," Mrs. Mumford responded, "just the thought of meeting a prince and a count and a baron and the younger son of an English lord, all in one lump!"

"Now, look here, Virginia Mumford"—Lillie took a didactic attitude. "I hope you're not going to lose your head in the usual snob style over nobility. That would be too much! They're nothing but a lot of ruined good-for-nothings, any way; ready to do for money anything that turns up, even to marrying an American girl, provided there's cash enough back of her."

"Well, a prince is a prince, just the same. I don't care what his feelings about money may be."

"Yes," Lillie condescended; "I suppose that's so. I admit I do feel a certain agitation at the thought of lunching with a real prince. It's the first time, though, and that counts for something."

But Lillie's agitation increased when she found herself at Ciro's, with the Prince on one side of her at table, and the Count on the other, and both so exceedingly courteous and *empressé* that it seemed to her as if both were waiting simply the chance to find themselves alone with her, in order to declare their admiration, if not more than that.

At a neighboring table were lunching the Grand Duke Cyril and his wife. Prince Gianotti, pointing them out, whispered into Lillie's ear the story of the Grand Duchess. She had, it seemed, divorced her husband to marry the Grand Duke, who was the love of her life, and who adored her.

"But I thought," Lillie said, turning to the Prince, "that people in Europe did n't divorce."

"Grand duchesses"—the Prince shrugged his shoulders—"they do as they like. They do not *follow*; they *make* the law and the fashions. But every one can't be a grand duchess, of course."

His expression was pleasing as he made this remark, and Lillie Morse looked at the wife of the Grand Duke. The Prince's dark hair, brushed into a glossy lustre, waved backwards from his high brow. His eyes, deep-set under level brows, were melancholy. His short, dark mustache covered a mouth accustomed to smile, but sad in repose. Lillie felt that there was some hidden sorrow in the life of the Prince. He looked so romantic. A movement of tenderness surged up from within as she gazed at his handsome face. Turning at that moment, his eyes met hers, and there was a strange bond of sympathy established through the single glance.

And the Prince did not avoid the subject of personal attraction, like the Anglo-Saxon. He spoke at once of the *sympatica* response which Lillie had awakened in him.

"You are the first American young lady I have ever met," he said, "who seems to be not superficial. You have a soul, *Signorina*," he added, nodding his handsome head.

Miss Morse felt a certain enchantment at being thus told by the first prince she had ever met that she had a soul. The affirmation gave her confidence in herself. Alonzo Bedford seemed suddenly millions of miles away, like a poor speck on the horizon. The fearful independence of the Grand Duchess gave her a semi-royal feeling in the thought of indulging her American liberty. After all, Alonzo Bedford had left Paris at the critical moment; just when she was arriving. Why should she reserve for him any sentiment of especial loyalty? There was no use in being ridiculous.

She heard the Prince's voice at her side in response to her reflections.

"Does the *Signorina* care for excitement, like all American young ladies?"

"I adore it!" Lillie cried.

"Do you like automobiling in a racing machine?"

"Heavenly!" Miss Morse exclaimed.

"*Tanto meglio, tanto meglio*," the Prince responded. "I have a machine of a friend of mine who's travelling just now in his yacht. Perhaps some day we may make a *promenade* together?"

"Too nice for words!"

Lillie didn't care now about anything further than the present moment. It was exhilarating to be with a prince, and to have him solicitous. She would go with him, certainly, in his motor.

The orchestra of Tziganies had meanwhile been tuning their instruments to the indication given by the violin, and now they burst into a strange, rhythmic music that caught hold of Lillie's heart-strings with a passionate appeal. The air they were playing was the "*Dolcezza*," an Italian love-poem set to music, and the Prince, leaning close to Lillie, murmured the words of the refrain, first in Italian, then in English:

*"Tutto al mondo è vano,
Nè l'amore ogni dolcezza.*

"All is vain under the sun;
In love lies every happiness."

Lillie listened; a smile parted her pretty scarlet lips. As the last note of the sobbing melody died away, the Prince murmured:

"When, *Signorina*, will you go with me in my motor to follow the blue coast, one afternoon?"

"To-morrow?" Miss Morse ventured. "There's no time like the present, you know, with Americans. To-morrow about four."

Mrs. Bellamy-Scott had risen from the table, and she indicated her desire now to stroll for a moment on the terrace of the Casino. Seeing this sign of general departure, the Prince caught up Miss Morse's hand, and as he kissed it he said:

"*Grazie, grazie, Signorina*. To-morrow, at four in the afternoon."

But Mrs. Bellamy-Scott was more persistent than Lillie in her determination to make a rendezvous. She gathered about her the Prince, the Count, the Baron, and Mr. Langfrew.

"What about to-night?" she asked. "Suppose we all meet after dinner in the gaming-room of the Casino?"

Mrs. Mumford looked at Lillie, who nodded an emphatic "Yes." The others acquiesced, all except the Prince Gianotti. With reverent regret, he bowed over Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's hand, and, kissing it, he pronounced his excuse—he was dining that night with the Grand Duchess Cyril. He could not, therefore, freely dispose of his evening.

Mrs. Bellamy-Scott, disappointed at the Prince's refusal to accompany their party, was nevertheless inwardly delighted at the royal-grand-duchess-excuse which her most coveted guest had given.

As they entered the gaming-rooms that evening, Mrs. Bellamy-Scott and her friends, Lillie Morse was penetrated by a certain atmosphere of sentiment in the midst of so much rapacious brilliancy. Why had she a slight pull at her heart-strings? The place was tragic enough, to be sure, but she contemplated with perfect detachment the ferocious gamblers who hovered like harpies about the long green tables. They were massed there as multiple and anonymous fragments of steel mass themselves about a magnet, clinging, vibrating, palpitating. These men and these women seemed electrified by some strange, inexplicable force which clutched at the current in the so-called human passion. There were young and old, side by side; beauty that evidently despaired, and old age that was hoping still.

Lillie, gazing at the moving spectacle before her, sought Virginia's eyes, and when they had met, her shoulders went up in a little shrug, as much as to say, "What difference does it make? It's all so unreal, it can never touch you or me!"

But the sentimental appeal to her inmost feelings was made through a strain of music which drifted up from the terrace. It was the *Dolcezza* again, and Lillie remembered the Prince's face as he had translated for her into English the words:

*Tutto al mondo è vano,
Nè l'amore ogni dolcezza.*

Sydney Langfrew had fallen to Lillie's lot. Mrs. Bellamy-Scott was having a desperate flirtation with the Count Marcelin. Strombitz seemed to have taken a fancy, as Virginia expressed it, to her, and Miss Morse now, while the other women wandered at will about the gaming-rooms, seemed to fall naturally under the protection of Mr. Langfrew. He was very talkative. Perhaps he divined her feelings, accustomed as he was to the "eternal feminine," for presently he said:

"Hello! There's that *Dolcezza* again. They were playing it this morning while we were lunching at Ciro's. Do you remember?"

"Yes," Lillie nodded.

"It is Gianotti's favorite air, don't you know, that *Dolcezza*."

"Really?" Lillie asked.

"Yes. Do you know the Prince?" And then, quickly recollecting, "Oh, yes, you met him to-day at Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's, I remember. What a dear lady Mrs. Bellamy-Scott is! We're all devoted to her. Her slaves, don't you know."

"She was a school friend of Mrs. Mumford," Miss Morse threw in, with a sort of bored desire to say something.

"Oh, yes, don't you know, such a dear!" Langfrew declared. "Just a trifle, wee, little, weeny bit snob, eh?" He looked at Lillie

askance with his fair, handsome eyes, and went on: "Yes, just a teeny mite snobbish. But, after all, we must forgive that, especially in an American lady. We must n't take advantage of that little weakness, as the Prince does, for example. That would be quite against my principles."

"How do you mean," Lillie asked, "as the Prince does?"

"Well, you know, don't you know, Gianotti, for example, was n't dining one bit with the Grand Duchess to-night. The fact is"—Langfrew drew nearer to Miss Morse—"he can't stand gambling. You understand me. As long as he keeps away from the tables, he's all right. The instant he comes over the threshold he's done for. He's like some men with alcohol: it's enough to whiff the fumes to be half-seas-over. Prince Gianotti knew that if he came here to-night he could n't resist, and as he has n't a penny to bless himself and his splendid name with, he thought best to keep away. But he could n't tell all that to Mrs. Bellamy-Scott." Langfrew laughed. "An American lady would have no respect for a prince who could n't resist temptation. Dear, dear, no! So, don't you know, the Prince simply concocted, out of his lovely Italian imagination, that sweet little untruth about dining with the royal family. Awfully ingenious of him, don't you know, awfully Latin. An Anglo-Saxon would never have the face to—well, to fabricate in that manner."

"No, I should think not," Lillie murmured. And she led the way, stepping down on to the terrace to join the others, who had seated themselves about a small table which was laden with liqueur glasses and bottles. Lillie took a vacant place between Von Strombitz and Mrs. Bellamy-Scott. The moon in its early brightness was put to shame by the multiple lights which glared and flared about the open-air café, but there was something intense, limitless, in the deep blue of the horizon as it lay beyond the silent, sombre stretch of sea, and as Lillie gazed, she became dreamy. She was not listening to the conversation of the others, and after a time she leaned forward and appealed to Langfrew.

"Do me a favor," she said: "find those Tziganies, wherever they are, and ask them to play again the *Dolcezza*."

Langfrew disappeared, and presently from some part of the terrace floated up the refrain:

All is vain under the sun;
In love lies every happiness.

VI.

THE following day, at about four in the afternoon, Lillie Morse, standing on the hotel steps, greeted Prince Gianotti with a gay little nod and an exclamation of slight disappointment.

"But where's the motor?"

"Was it only the motor you cared to see, *Signorina*?" the Prince responded, and his eyes, while he said this, revealed his own preference for the human vision. He studied admiringly Miss Morse's exquisitely slender figure, whose graceful lines appeared more delicate under the weight of a heavy automobile coat. A long veil of *réséda* chiffon hung from the brim of her small hat. The wind caught the folds, and threw the shadows hither and thither over the pale green surface of the light tissue. She held one end of this enveloping cloud, and, drawing it across the lower part of her face, she let only her eyes remain uncovered while she gazed steadily at the Prince, saying:

"Look, tell the truth! Do I or don't I seem glad to see you?"

The Prince lifted to his lips Lillie's free hand and kissed it. Then, standing for a moment longer on the *perron* of the hotel, he explained that as his machine was a racing-car, he did n't like to bring it up into the courtyard of the hotel, which necessitated a series of manœuvres that might somewhat jeopardize the health and wholeness of the buttons, the chasseurs, and various other servants who were gathered about the entrance of the European hostelry.

"The drive I've planned," the Prince continued, installing Miss Morse in one of the low *baquets* when they had regained the motor, while he swung his leg under the *guidon* and settled himself beside her, "is first to Nice along the Riviera, then back to Monte Carlo by the Grand Corniche."

Miss Morse could only nod in response, as the quick starting of the motor at the minimum speed of thirty kilometres an hour gave her the impression of being shot from a machine, which took her breath away. But in a moment, when they had struck the lower road, its smooth white surface seemed to glide under them as if their automobile were some hungry monster devouring in silence mile after mile of the glistening route. Lillie's first exclamation was for the beauty of the scene, the blue sea, the purple mountains, the brilliant sunshine. Gianotti delighted in her enthusiasm.

"I do not even see this view you speak of," he said to her, and apologetically she exclaimed:

"I ought n't to divert your attention when you're driving, I suppose. Is it very bad of me?"

"No, not that, not that! But I have no eyes for the view when I have the view of your eyes."

"Oh, how gallant!" Miss Morse laughed, showing the flash of her white teeth through the meshes of her *réséda* veil.

"Not gallant," he responded deliberately. "It is the truth, and I tell you something else, *Signorina*. I am born of an old family, what you call 'decadent' in your young America, but I have learned what

it means to 'bluff,' and I have found out for myself one thing: the biggest bluff in the whole world is the truth. It's the hardest thing to get anybody to believe."

"Well, you could n't expect me to believe what you said just now about my eyes?" Lillie queried, resting the gaze of those two clear sapphires upon the Prince's dark pupils.

"No," Gianotti responded; "you would n't believe it, of course, because it is the truth."

Something very intense had come into the accent of his voice as he said these words, and Lillie felt a little thrill of pleasure. The compliment which she had taken so lightly as a bit of banal gallantry was the expression of some true sentiment, evidently. She reflected upon this, contentedly, while Gianotti's manner continued *empressé*, ardent almost.

In the short remaining course over the last few kilometres to Nice she felt a new attraction toward this foreigner. Indeed, when they halted at last at the entrance of Rumpelmeyer's, descended from the motor, and took their places at one of the tables in these fashionable tea-rooms, Miss Morse was conscious of that vague, agreeable, exhilarating sensation which in the feminine vocabulary is designated as, "I actually believe I'm beginning to care for him." As she lifted her veil, drew off her long gloves, and threw them down with her purse—a bag of generous gold links over whose flexible surface were scattered in geometrical precision a handful of flashing diamonds—Prince Gianotti uttered a little exclamation:

"*Che bellezza!* It is a Cartier, I'm sure, who has designed you this Parisian creation!"

"Yes," the girl responded, as she turned the jewelled object over in her slender fingers. "Is n't it a beauty?" She drew from within it a bunch of French bank-notes, holding out the empty purse for the Italian to admire the *finesse* of the work. He studied it, amazed at the carelessness with which this young American girl carried so precious an object, and a roll of notes into the bargain, whose value amounted in all well up into the thousands of francs.

Miss Morse was pleased with the Prince's admiration of her jewelled purse. She leaned forward, drew toward her a teacup, filled it with the topaz liquid which had been brewing, blurred the whole with a dash of cream, and dropped into the cloudy midst a block of French sugar. Then, with a touch of intimacy, she looked at the Prince and laughed.

"I'm having a perfectly fine time. In this crowd of strangers, it seems as if I'd known you all my life."

Her remark delighted the Prince.

"I hope we may be friends all the rest of our lives," he said, lean-

ing his handsome head close to hers. "I tell you the other day that you are the first American young lady I meet who have what we call soul. You are *sympatica, Signorina, molto sympatica.*"

While he made this response, Gianotti had paid the *garçon* for their *goûter*, and Miss Morse presently led the way out of Rumplemeyer's, through the swinging doors, into the fast deepening twilight. As she took her place in the motor again, she dwelt mentally upon the slight accent of scorn with which her companion had pronounced the words, "How could she be happy, married thus out of her class!" What did it feel like, she wondered, to be in that "class" to which everything is permitted. And as they glided rapidly along, mounting, mounting the Grand Corniche, she decided, muffled in her furs, contentedly installed by the Prince's side, that she would quite enjoy the sensation of being a princess herself, a real princess.

At a steep turning in the road, when they had reached the highest point, Gianotti brought the motor to a standstill.

"It's a frightful descent from here down," he said, turning to the girl beside him, "in a racing machine especially, and more especially in this deepening twilight. You're not afraid?"

Lillie rendered a "Not with so good a driver!"

"*Brava! Brava!*" the Prince cried, extricating one of her little hands from the furs that enveloped them, and touching it to his lips, lightly, with the Italian gallantry. His handsome face and strong, regular features appealed amazingly to the girl at this moment. She had not withdrawn her hand, but let it lie in Gianotti's. Stooping again, he kissed it, this time with something more than gallantry, and as the motor swept forward Miss Morse felt a thrill that was not all excitement at speeding so swiftly down a rapid descent in the obscurity of the early winter darkness.

Gianotti was intent upon the automobile. The turnings were sharp, the road frightfully steep. With both hands on the *guidon*, he did not speak again. Yet Lillie was instinctively uneasy. An accident in this part of the Grand Corniche, the slightest defect in the steering-gear or the brake, and they would inevitably be precipitated over the perilous incline that flanked the road. Her vigilance was unabated. She lifted her veil, threw it back over her hat, and fastened it there, while, with her eyes thus unshielded, she peered into the darkness.

Down, down they went, winding, twisting, turning. Gianotti bent a moment to adjust the oil-feeders, and Lillie was at that instant the only one to see a shadow that swept out into the road just beyond, and halted there. With a swift gesture, she made the Prince see what she saw, and as he stopped the motor short she found words to say:

"There's a man there ahead, an awful-looking man. It seems as though he wanted to get at the motor."

"More likely into it," the Prince muttered, calling aloud to the shadow ahead, whose very posture was menacing:

"*Hey! Dites donc. Allez-vous-en de là!*"

"*Pas si facilement que ça!*" the shadow responded, approaching. Lillie could see that it was a man in peasant's clothes. There was on his face a look of terrifying hatred, which made her shudder as the conversation continued between the two men in French, spoken so rapidly that she could not understand what they were saying. Only here and there the words "money," "my sister," "suicide," "vengeance," and "ruin," and "a young girl defenseless," were comprehensible. But the intensity and violence of the peasant's manner were dreadful.

It was money the man wanted. That was too evident.

The road was barred before them. And Gianotti was hesitating!

So long as the man stood in front of the machine, this hesitation might mean a desperate conflict, death perhaps. The peasant, no doubt, was armed; Gianotti, without defense. Moreover—the thought flashed through Lillie's mind like lightning—the Prince, perhaps, had no money with him. She felt for her purse. Swiftly she pulled it from her coat-pocket. She leaned forward, looking the man full in the face.

"*Argent?*" she cried. "Money? *Trois mille francs?* Is it enough?"

The flash of diamonds on the jewelled bag caught the man's eye, stopped his chattering oaths.

"Good God!" Gianotti shouted. "She's given him her purse!"

The man, catching the precious sack as Lillie threw it, snapped open the diamond clasp, his fingers playing among the banknotes while he yet stood square before the motor. But the Prince, with a brutal gesture, started forward, and the man, grinning and muttering some further words which Lillie could not understand, sprang aside and let them pass on, down the turning, tortuous road.

In silence they swept along to the foot of the Corniche. Then Gianotti murmured in a tone of tenderness:

"*Sia benedetta.* You have saved us. By some miserable chance, I was without money, other than a few francs. Had it not been for you, I cannot say how things would have ended."

"But why should that horrible man have attacked you? It's worse than the Far West," Miss Morse exclaimed. She felt, now the shock was over, that she was trembling slightly. Yet, mingled with her amazement at all that had happened, there was a longing for justice, a desire to see some measure taken at once in the pursuit of their assailant.

"You must notify the police instantly," she declared to the Prince.

"No, no, not for worlds," Gianotti insisted, with a strange intensity. "No one must know this. It must be kept a secret between you and me."

"But," Lillie cried, "that awful man can rob the next people who pass in the same way he robbed us."

"It is not possible I notify the *gens d'armes*," the Prince reiterated. "You cannot understand. You are accustomed to the freedom of American ways. If it is known what has happened, all Nice, all Monte Carlo, all the Riviera, Mrs. Bellamy-Scott, Mr. Langfrew, *est-ce que je sais, moi*, will make a scandal of it. I don't mind for myself, you see"—he shrugged his shoulders—"but you will be compromised. You will be compromised. *Ca ne se fait pas*. It is not customary for a young girl to be with a man friend, alone, automobiling so late in the afternoon. It has grown later than I intended. I must protect you in this, believe me, believe me!"

Lillie could make no further objections. She could not notify the police herself. A little wave of regret went over her for her lost purse. It was such a beauty! But Gianotti was insistent.

They had come down to the road in front of the hotel, and as he held his hand out to Miss Morse, who stepped somewhat unsteadily from the motor, he said again:

"Not a word to any one, *non è vero?* I beg of you. Not even to the Signora Mumford. Above all, not to the Signora Bellamy-Scott."

Feigning a headache, Lillie did not dress for dinner that night. She had the maid serve her in their own sitting-room, where she stretched herself out on the sofa, enveloped in a cloud of pink *crêpe de chine* and lace, while she wondered at all that had happened that afternoon, and thought half reluctantly how she longed in reality for some one with whom she could "talk things over," some one who was not a foreigner, some one who was an American. And a man—a manly man. "Like Alonzo Bedford, for instance," she murmured to herself, with a backward turn of her memory to the day when she and Bedford had stood beneath his windows on the Quai Voltaire in Paris, just as that poor broken-hearted girl had tried to drown herself in the Seine. For some reason Lillie could not explain, the recollection of that livid face, as it lay crowned with its masses of dark wet hair, recalled to her another face. Whose? Where was the resemblance? . . . Ah! She had fixed it now. . . . She had traced it. The livid face of the little half-drowned girl was like a fair duplicate of the visage which she saw still close to her own as she had leaned forward over the motor, her jewelled purse outstretched in her hand. Yes, that horrible man on the Corniche reminded her in some way of the little *suicidée*. Could that poor, helpless creature be the girl, the "sister" to whom their aggressor had alluded in the torrent of words which she could

scarcely understand, as he railed in violent altercation with the Prince? Lillie meditated. A thought flashed across her mind: could the Prince be the man who had wronged this poor young girl, who had made her long to end her life in this tragic manner? Was it the Prince who had loved her, or made love to her, and then abandoned her?

Lillie put the idea from her; the coincidence would be too extraordinary.

"I suppose everybody I see now for a week will remind me of that awful man." As she shuddered to this conclusion, she rang for the maid, and, having asked for her portfolio and writing materials, she started a long letter addressed to "Mr. Alonzo Bedford, St. Moritz, Engadine, Suisse."

VII.

MRS. BELLAMY-SCOTT had herded her little flock together and was steering them toward Ventimiglia for a lunch at the *Réserve*. It was about noon when the party got under way. The air was warm and balmy, and with consummate art the cosmopolitan had arranged a veil of white illusion over her little sailor hat. Where the folds of the tulle formed a cloud around her throat, she had fastened a tiny boa of zibeline.

"You seem to be the snow maiden herself," Langfrew cried, "melting, don't you know, sort of dissolving in the warmth of her own radiant smile." The young Englishman was in excellent spirits. The odd number of the party, he represented the somewhat detached attitude of mind that permits of a frivolous participation in passing events which, for the sentimentally inclined, are fraught with suggestive meaning.

Seeing the Prince for the first time since their strange adventure on the Grand Corniche, about which she had at his request kept silence absolutely, Lillie Morse was stirred and troubled. She wondered what the Prince's attitude towards her would be; whether he had found any news of their assailant. She wondered vaguely whether he would give her back her purse, or one like hers. . . .

Mrs. Mumford, in like manner, was preoccupied. For the last few days the Baron von Strombitz had not left her side. He found in her presence such evident pleasure as brought her, with growing assurance, to the conclusion that he cared for her, and that she must come to some decision with regard to him.

Von Strombitz was adroit. He knew American women. He prided himself on his delicate understanding of the limits in the Anglo-Saxon flirtation, and so long as he made no declaration, Mrs. Mumford could proffer no defense. So she drifted in a dream-like, harmless atmosphere, feeling younger than she had for years. This frivolous existence, into which Lillie Morse and Mrs. Bellamy-Scott had led her, absorbed

an amazing amount of time. She had scarcely a moment in which to think, and as for letters! She thrust one hand into her coat as they rode comfortably along towards Ventimiglia. There in her pocket lay the last communication from Hal, received that morning as they were starting out, the envelope yet unopened. He wrote every day a line: he and Alonzo Bedford were feeling splendidly; the winter sports at St. Moritz were great; he was glad he had come; she would find him ten years younger after this outing. She was a dear girl. Affairs were going better in New York; she could order as many dresses as she liked in the Rue de la Paix, and would she please get through with all her dressmaking before he and Bedford returned, so that she and Lillie could "play" with them?

Mrs. Mumford turned over the unopened letter in her pocket, and, with feminine *finesse*, felt through the envelope that there was no "especial news" in this communication from her husband. It worried her a little to have left it there unread.

Gaining every minute in speed, they had beaten Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's Renault in its moderate course, and were already at table when the others arrived. Mrs. Bellamy-Scott jangled from her wrist a massive gold chatelaine, and as she studied the tilt of her hat in the little jewelled mirror, the Prince Gianotti, who took the seat next to Lillie Morse, said to her in an undertone:

"It is not found yet, your purse. You shall have it, *Signorina*. You have told no one?"

Miss Morse shook her head, fearful lest the others might overhear, and Gianotti, with his impulsive gesture, caught up her hand and kissed it.

"Oh, oh!" Mrs. Bellamy-Scott cried, rattling her gold chatelaine. "Prince, what *empressement*! You've been separated from Miss Morse for about an hour, and you greet her with effusion. . . . Virginia, it is getting serious!" She nodded her head again into the mirror, but Langfrew took up the argument:

"Gianotti's quite right! I'm sure Americans approve of the foreign hand-kissing. It's so deferential. *Cela ne vous engage à rien*, as a matter of fact!"

With characteristic absence of self-consciousness, Gianotti had started in to satisfy his hunger, falling with agile fingers upon the *hors d'œuvres* which were set out in tempting array upon the table. As he lifted a glass of the sparkling Italian Chianti to his lips, he gazed at Lillie with an expression of impulsive admiration. It was the first time he had looked at her with more than deferential approbation, and in this long enveloping glance Lillie now felt as if she were suddenly caressed. The Prince's arm, brushing hers, which was uncovered to the elbow, paused, loitered, as if in the momentary contact he wished

to express his newly-awakened love for Miss Morse. Startled, happy, Lillie moved slightly away from him, with a smothered exclamation which sent the color flaming into her cheeks.

"The table's so awfully small," she said.

Gianotti's lips were close to her ear as he murmured: "The table is small, but there are too many people. I should like it with you alone, with you and me alone."

The color stained deeper the fair contour of Lillie's cheek, and the Prince, ardent, persisted in an undertone:

"I should like it if we were away from every one, just you and I. I would show you what love may be. I would rouse you as the Prince awoke the Sleeping Beauty, by the magic power of love, of my love." And as Lillie, sending a rapid glance about the table lest they should be overheard, laughed nervously, the Prince added in a low tone, his voice vibrating: "My Sleeping Beauty, I love you, I love you!"

The sound of his words was covered by a general burst of laughter. Langfrew was relating some story which had set the others into a state of hilarity. Bent evidently upon playing the role of buffoon, he continued, drawling more than ever over his words, while Lillie's ears were ringing to the echo of another voice: "I love you, I love you, my Sleeping Beauty!"

The hostess had given the signal to rise. She wandered with Count Marcellin to the more remote part of the little Ventimiglia restaurant garden where, under the shadow of the umbrella pines, she installed herself, prepared to chatter idly with her *amoureux* until the chauffeur had lunched and the Renault was again in movement.

Lillie felt a certain timidity at finding herself alone with Gianotti. She had that strange feminine intuition that the Prince was "going to propose," and while she enjoyed with a new exultation the thought that she had so easily charmed this Italian nobleman, and that she might if she wished be herself a princess, yet the *dénouement* had come too swiftly. Unlike the American men, Gianotti had taken seriously her flippant encouragement. She had talked as she had with the Prince to fifty Americans without their immediately making love to her. Her happy uncertainty in the newness of the situation gave her a longing to be alone with him, and yet a dread of it. But all chance for such a tête-à-tête was swept ruthlessly to the *néant* by Mrs. Mumford. With Von Strombitz trailing after her, she fluttered over to Lillie's side, and, drawing a chair close, while the two men talked together, she said hastily to Miss Morse:

"I've just caught sight of Carlton Mason, lunching over there."

"Carlton Mason?" Lillie repeated in a vague voice, her mind far away from Virginia. "Well, what of it?" she drawled the question, slightly irritated at Mrs. Mumford's animation over this encounter,

when she herself, on the eve, if she wished it, of being proposed to by a genuine prince, was as calm as a May morning.

"Don't you understand?"—Mrs. Mumford twisted her pretty hands in supplication. "Hal's chum. He sees us here. He writes to Hal. And we're done for, simply done for. Hal will know everything. Oh, it's so silly of us to have come here this way! You've just got us into the most awful box, Lillie, by this ridiculous adventure."

"Virginia, calm yourself," the younger woman protested, alarmed at the tremor in her companion's voice, and fearful of a sudden outburst of tears. But more effective than Lillie's severity in arresting Mrs. Mumford's threatening tears, was the sudden appearance of Mr. Mason himself.

"Well, did I ever!" he cried.

Virginia feigned amazement. Mr. Mason's broad face flattened itself in its shining smoothness under the roomy smile that distended his nose and mouth. Lillie, with but one image in her mind, stared at him, and made frightfully disparaging comments on the coarseness of American men. But Mrs. Mumford, losing her head, presented Mr. Mason gushingly to her.

"Well, I declare," the latter said, "I knew you were over on this side, but I thought you ladies"—he nodded at them both admiringly—"were doing up the Rue de la Paix. Hal never said a word about Monte Carlo in his letter. Having a pleasant stay?" he added. "Did you ever see such weather? There's only one thing that can beat it, I guess, and that's the sunshine in the U. S. A. But it's a mighty fine place this, all right." He glanced with his small eyes at the two men, Gianotti and Von Strombitz, who stood near by, chatting idly. Then he chuckled, "I see you go in for the Dago crowd," and his eyes wandered back to his own table near the veranda, where a party of American men and two American women, very stout and somewhat overdressed, were waiting for him. "I'll tell Mumford I've caught this little glimpse of you, and that you were looking A No. 1." He held out a broad, stubby hand, first to Virginia, who gasped a breathless good-by, then to Lillie Morse, who as she placed her finger-tips in the fat palm of Carlton Mason felt already a slight shudder of condescension, such as she knew a Princess would feel at having to shake hands with a big, fat American business man, like this friend of Mr. Mumford's. But Virginia's thoughts were far from princesses. She sank back in a listless heap against the iron curves of the little *fauteuil* as Mr. Mason turned his generous back upon them.

"Virginia," Miss Morse entreated, "courage! It's no sin to be in a place like Monte Carlo, is it? I'm sure the people we're going with are as good as the Masons. I don't see what earthly objection Hal could have to our amusing ourselves. He can't reproach us, for he simply

went off and deserted us in stupid old, wintry Paris." Lillie was getting frightfully intense as she saw the Prince and Von Strombitz, fearing to be indiscreet by remaining too near, stroll off in the direction of the veranda, where Langfrew sat, lazily smoking a pipe. "As far as I am concerned," Lillie added peevishly, "I'm not responsible to any one. If you're sorry you came, you can go back to Paris."

"But what will you do?" Mrs. Mumford queried.

"I'll stay with Mrs. Bellamy-Scott."

Virginia paused for a moment, then she said:

"Well, we might stay for the carnival, I suppose. Our costumes are all ordered. It'll be a tremendous experience. I don't believe Carlton Mason writes many letters. He's on his holiday."

The three men had strolled back from the veranda; they now joined the ladies. As though divining something of their conversation, Von Strombitz asked:

"You're going to stay for the carnival at Nice, are you not?"

Mrs. Mumford looked at Lillie, who, with her clear blue eyes resting upon those of the Prince, answered:

"Yes, of course; Mrs. Mumford and I were just saying that we'd never been so happy anywhere as here."

Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's perfect little Renault had glided silently up, followed by Langfrew's machine, into which the party now climbed, leaving Gertie and the Count Marcelin to follow as they pleased, on the homeward journey to Monte Carlo.

VIII.

LATURBIE was the objective point selected by Mrs. Bellamy-Scott for tea on the following afternoon, and the faithful made with her this pilgrimage as to a shrine.

As they all descended from the funicular car, Mrs. Bellamy-Scott, alert as hostess, turned to her friends, and, with a sidelong glance at the Count Marcelin, said:

"Until four o'clock every one may do as he pleases, wander where he likes. At four we meet for tea." And as if her remark were some incisive instrument, the party broke up at once, scattering in different directions. Lillie accepted the suggestion of Prince Gianotti that she traverse with him the half-deserted village of Laturbie and climb the hills beyond, where they could have a splendid view. Once installed upon the mountain slope, it was not the view on which the Prince Gianotti fixed his eyes; he gazed with longing admiration at Miss Morse, until at last she became embarrassed, and, turning laughingly, placed her parasol across his eyes. But he caught the hand which was free, in both of his; he bowed over it, kissed it, and murmured to Lillie, as he had at Ventimiglia:

"I love you, my Sleeping Beauty, I love you!"

"You must n't," Lillie remonstrated feebly, drawing her hand from Prince Gianotti's firm clasp. "You must n't."

"Say to the mountain torrents, 'You must n't'!" cried the Prince. "Say to the ocean's tide, 'You must n't'! Say to the love, the ardent passion, of a man for his adored one, 'You must n't'! Try to curb the violent forces of nature with your little wilful 'No,' and wait for the result, my own!" he cried, again folding Lillie's hand in his own and drawing closer to her.

"You must n't!" she cried again instinctively, not knowing what she did.

"My own," the Prince repeated, "your resistance is like the beating of a butterfly's wings. Rest a moment here. Be in peace. Know that I love you." He drew nearer, folding his arms about her. "You shall be my wife, my own. Say that you will, dearest soul."

For an instant, Lillie's head swam. She leaned, not quite knowing where she was, against the strong arm of the Prince, in an abandon which left no room for thought. But the sudden approach of his lips to hers brought her back, like the dash of cold water on the half-unconscious. Furiously she flung herself away from the man beside her.

"You must n't!" she cried angrily. "And that's not a useless murmuring against the force of nature! I mean what I say. I'm not a Latin, you must remember. I'm a free-born American girl. I decide for myself what I want and what I don't want."

"But you must listen to me," Gianotti murmured, trying again to fold her in his arms. "I love you. That is not nothing! The love of an honest man? I want you for my wife, my own. You shall be Princess, Princess Gianotti. Say that you will not refuse me. Say that my love impresses you. Give me an answer, my beloved soul. Give it and let it be 'yes.'"

The earnest note that thrilled through the Prince's words touched Lillie. Then the recollection of their drive on the Corniche flashed across her mind. The Prince's insufficiency and inadequacy to defend her surged back upon her thoughts! Her own suspicions regarding the poor little half-drowned girl in Paris. She remembered a remark which Sydney Langfrew had often made: "The Italians are all very well for lovers, but for husbands—I pity the woman who *marries* one of them." Slowly, by a thousand instinctive influences, Lillie Morse's thoughts were turned from the appeal the Prince was making to her. She spoke to him gently, but with a decision, a firmness, that amazed him.

"No," she said very solemnly; "I cannot marry you. Not possibly!"

"But why, why, Signorina Lillie? Do you not see my love, and how I would make you happy?"

"Your love is only half of the story." Lillie shook her head.

"You mean I do not love enough?"

"No," Lillie explained very sweetly; "I mean that two must love, to make a marriage. You love me, but I do not love you. I can't love you."

"Oh, say that perhaps you may learn to."

"No, I can't possibly. I can't, because you're a foreigner. It's not prejudice. It's just something in my marrow-bones that makes me know I never could be happy with any one but an American." Lillie felt relieved when she had spoken these words, which, as nearly as she could formulate them, expressed her sentiments; but she was astonished and somewhat touched when she saw that Gianotti was weeping.

"You were my chance of happiness," he murmured, his face buried in his hands. "Do not say, *Signorina*, that I have lost you!"

Lillie watched the tears well slowly through his fingers, glide over the palms of his long, slender hands. They were real tears, the first that any man had shed for her. She felt inclined to show her compassion, but a recollection of the Prince's ardor, as he had spoken to her, froze her impulse at its source. She could show him no tenderness which he would not misunderstand, mistake for love.

"Ah, *Signorina*," he murmured, "say that I have at least a chance to win you!"

"I can't say that," she answered. "It would not be true."

"Then tell me untruths," cried the Prince, "but let me hope."

"I can't," Lillie repeated. "I cannot tell you what is n't true."

The Italian lifted his handsome face. The eyes were limpid, the cheek was wet. He gazed long at the girl by his side. And then he said with desperate fervor:

"Oh, if you were only poor, Signorina Lillie!"

Miss Morse shrugged her shoulders, not understanding this allusion to her worldly wealth, and the Prince continued:

"Yes, poor. I might make you understand. You would perhaps love me then."

This question of money irritated the American girl.

"But I'm not poor," she said, "and I hope I never shall be."

Some distant clock struck four. The silvery notes rang out across the hillside. The shadows had deepened, folding all in a semi-obscurity which too obviously suggested the lateness of the winter hour. Miss Morse got up from where she and the Prince had been sitting.

"Come," she called, "we are going to find the others for tea. You must n't be blue. I'm not a bit more interesting than hundreds of

girls. You'll forget all about me in no time, when I've gone back to Paris."

They had started to make their way through the little village of Laturbie, to join the others, who had given them a rendezvous at four o'clock for tea. As they traversed the main street of the half-deserted town, in a part where the houses were crumbling to ruins, Lillie suddenly noticed a man who was following them. He slipped out from a vacant yard and ran toward them, unseen by the Prince. He then further tried to attract their attention by appearing on the road before them. But the Prince was absorbed, he was preoccupied, nothing could divert him from the desperation into which Lillie's answer to his appeal had plunged him.

Yet as this dusky man stood before them again and again, while they descended the road through Laturbie, Lillie believed she recognized him. He was the man who had attacked them on the steep, winding way when they were returning from Nice to Monte Carlo, by the Grand Corniche. There was no mistaking him. Amazed at this strange, persistent apparition, Lillie studied the features of the pursuer more closely than she had dared before, and again, involuntarily, her mind reverted to another face—that of the girl whom they had drawn from the Seine, half dead, on the day when she and Alonzo Bedford had been walking on the Quai before his flat. Yes; there was no doubt of it. Not mere feminine nerves, but intent observation, brought into startling comparison the little half-drowned girl with this violent assailant.

As they reached the lower road, the man, waiting for them at a sudden turning, laid his hand on Prince Gianotti's shoulder. The Prince uttered a sharp cry. Shaking himself free with a promise, half-muttered, half-cursed, to the man, he entreated Miss Morse to leave him and join the others.

"Go, *Signorina*," he said; "the tea place is only a step beyond. You will find the others. Forgive me, I must settle with this creature here."

And while Lillie traversed alone the remaining distance that separated her from Mrs. Bellamy-Scott and her guests, she felt a certain revulsion against the Prince.

Marry a man like this?

There was a burning flame in her cheeks as she put the question mentally to herself.

Be sent on ahead, alone, while the Prince settled old scores with gruesome men who jumped out in dark roads to assail him?

Marry him? No! No! A thousand times no!

Waiting until Lillie's slender figure had passed out of sight, the Prince turned to the peasant, who was looking also in the direction

where the young girl had disappeared. A low curse passed the man's lips, and he nodded sullenly.

"The time has come to reckon. I have made you my conditions. If you don't fulfil them, *tant pis pour vous*. You seek here to make a marriage, one of your rich marriages for money. But you will first pay the debts you owe, you understand?"

He drew near, so near that the Prince shrank back, as the man's breath blew warm against his cheek.

"Yes," he went on; "*tant pis*. You took my sister from us here, a peasant, defenseless. Where is she now? *Ah, Dieu!*"

With a gesture of despair he flung out his arms. "Where is she? Lost! *Perdue!* Gone to perdition. Has she not let us know herself from Paris, where she fled in your pursuit, that she has attempted there to drown herself? *Ah, Dieu! Dieu!*"

The man's voice sounded like a sob, and for a moment the Prince was softening, but in a flash the spirit of vengeance again animated the peasant, and with a violent bitterness of hatred he cried:

"You are in my power now! You shall make some reparation, or I will expose you. All you have done that is dastardly and contemptible, I will make it known to your fiancée!" He sneered.

At this last word of insult, the Prince, tingling, sprang forward instinctively and struck the man full across the head, a blow dealt nervously and with a tensivity that sent the peasant reeling, and spread him in an inanimate heap at the other side of the road.

Then, very quietly, Gianotti readjusted his hat, which had pitched to one side with the swinging of his uplifted arm.

He had no money to give this irate fellow whose sister he had made love to, foolishly enough, in a moment of youthful ardor. Nor could he give money to the little girl. He was not responsible for the transgressions of the lower class. And, above all, he could not endure being annoyed. It was necessary, and the sooner the better, that the irate brother—he glanced towards the lifeless heap at the side of the road—behave himself, cease his persecutions and his attempts at blackmail. "*Noblesse oblige, n'est-ce-pas?*" Again the Prince shook himself with a shiver of disgust, and then proceeded down the hill.

When Lillie reached the little inn where Mrs. Bellamy-Scott had given the rendezvous, she was greeted by a chorus of "Where is the Prince? What have you done with the poor fellow? You haven't thrown him down the mountain?"

Lillie did not find these jokes in the least funny, and the solemnity of her expression was met with a fresh outburst from Langfrew:

"Oh, I say, it's serious, don't you know!"

But at this moment Gianotti joined them. He was smiling. His

soft gray hat was pushed back on his dark hair. The trace of recent emotion intensified the brilliance of his expression. Lillie could not but admit to herself that he was wonderfully handsome.

IX.

VIRGINIA had come shuffling in on her heelless slippers of pink satin to the *salon*, where breakfast was laid. Sinking down before the table, she sighed, nodding her head at Lillie.

"Poor, darling Hal," she murmured. "He must think me a perfect p-i-g! I've never spent so much money in my life as I have since we've been in this awful place, and I've only written Hal about a quarter as often as I usually do."

"Well, he seems to be surviving all right," Lillie smiled.

"Yes, but what am I going to tell him?" Virginia's eyes were wide open and frank, like those of the astonished child who has followed his impulses heedlessly, and who finds himself suddenly obliged to give in accounts.

"Tell him?" Lillie echoed. "Why, tell him the truth."

"But I can't do that!" Virginia shook her head. "Yet I've never deceived him in my life, and I'd rather die than begin now. I love Hal better than anything in the world."

Miss Morse burst out laughing. "Mrs. Kill-joy Mumford, I'm going to nickname you, Virginia. Sufficient unto the day is the *man* thereof. Haven't you learned that, by this time? My maidenly experiences seem to have been at a better school than yours."

"Yes," Virginia reluctantly acquiesced; "but you don't love a man with all your soul and heart and mind and being."

"I don't go in for melodramas," Lillie tossed at her; "but I guess I know as much as the rest of you do, about some things."

This obscure remark, Virginia felt, was meant as invitation to allude to Lillie's sentimental affairs; but somehow Mrs. Mumford's wifely heart was set upon her own immediate problems.

"I'll be as glad as anything," she said, "when this old carnival's over, and we can go back to Paris again."

"Mrs. Kill-Joy," Lillie hummed. "The carnival's going to be simply wonderful. I tried my costume on yesterday. It's the prettiest thing you ever saw, Virginia Mumford!"

"I'm sure I'll feel like a scarecrow in mine," Virginia meditated. "Von Strombitz insisted on designing it for me." Then, very solemnly, she asked: "You don't believe that I have done the Baron von Strombitz any harm?"

Lillie shook with laughter.

"Poor old Von Strombitz! I guess he can take care of himself."

"Oh, Lillie!" Virginia sighed. "Try to understand my position."

"To conquer and resist! That's the gist of it," Lillie resumed.

"No, really. You know I'm not a flirt. Never since I've been married have I once allowed any man to make love to me. Never once."

"Well, you seem to be beginning."

"Oh, you dreadful creature!" Virginia cried.

"Look here," the younger woman said, "you'd better treat me with more respect. Suppose I were to tell you that I had refused a prince within the last forty-eight hours?"

Mrs. Mumford clapped her hands joyfully.

"Oh, Lillie, really?"

Miss Morse nodded assent.

"But why? Why refuse him?"

"Did n't love him," Lillie responded laconically. "Won't marry anybody I don't love. True American, I. The regular free-born type—looking for something to cling to." She laughed, but Mrs. Mumford was serious.

"You might be a princess?" she said.

"Yes," Lillie nodded.

Her companion stared at her a long time in amazement, and then she declared deliberately:

"Lillie Morse, you're in love with another man. You're in love with Alonzo Bedford. I'll stake my life on it."

The color staining Lillie's cheek told a tale of its own, but different from Lillie's words.

"I don't care a bit about Alonzo Bedford in the way you mean," she declared. "He's no more to me than a dozen nice Americans I've known ever since the Flood. But it is n't necessary to suppose I'm in love with some other man just because I refused Prince Giannotti, is it?"

"Well," Virginia meditated, "there are n't many American girls who seem to have the courage to refuse a bona fide prince. And I must say," she continued deliberately, "I think it would be rather amusing to become a princess."

Lillie had drifted into a more serious mood. She looked out now through the open window, over the Monaco gardens, to the wide stretch of sea beyond, blue as the heavens above, vibrating under the warm rays of the sun.

"Virginia," she said very solemnly, "I could n't possibly marry a man I did n't love; not even if he were a king. And I could n't possibly, no, not possibly, love a man who was n't an American."

The declaration was interrupted by the entrance of Eugénie, Mrs. Mumford's maid, bearing in one hand her mistress's carnival costume, which had just arrived, and in the other hand the mail from St.

Moritz, which also had just arrived. Virginia stretched out both arms with a smile of delight, and took from Eugénie the little fancy costume for the carnival.

When the evening of the carnival came, and Lillie Morse emerged from her hotel room into the *salon*, where she waited a moment, gazing at herself in the glass, astonished, happy, her incognita seemed assured, for even Mrs. Mumford, entering, looked with dazzled excitement at her, and exclaimed:

"Lillie! No one could ever know you!"

"Really?" Lillie asked, withdrawing her mask, and giving another rapid *coup d'œil* at her image in the mirror. "Am I so disguised as that? Put on your own mask, Virginia, and let's see whether I'd recognize you."

Virginia placed the little strip of black satin over her eyes.

"Now," she said, turning, "would you say at a glance, 'Virginia Mumford all over'?"

"I don't believe that even your own devoted, faithful Hal could have the vaguest, slightest passing notion as to who you are!" Lillie laughed delightedly.

The ball was to be given at the Casino, and Langfrew was to call for the ladies at half past eleven o'clock. The Committee of Decorations had decided that, according to the long-time tradition at the *Redoute*, the costumes, whatever fantasy, animal, flower, character, or person they might represent, must be in two colors only. Mauve and yellow was the combination they had selected, and Mrs. Mumford, following the carnival instructions, had donned a Columbine costume in mauve and yellow: short skirt, three-cornered hat, tiny cape hung from the shoulders. She appeared young and seductive in this gown which Von Strombitz had designed for her.

Lillie Morse had composed for herself a butterfly costume. The wings, the bodice, the skirts, the stockings, and the slippers were of mauve and yellow. A tiny cap bound her brow, and from beneath her hair escaped, short and curly, a golden mass. Yellow her hair, mauve her eyes, whose habitual blue had deepened to violet with the excitement of the moment.

X.

A BLAZE of light, a warm, gigantic breath of perfume, a sea of figures moving to the violent rhythm of a Hungarian orchestra,—such was their first glimpse of the *Redoute* at the Nice Casino.

Prompt to the minute of eleven-thirty, Langfrew had reappeared at the hotel, calling for the two ladies. Their escort, however, was transformed.

As Lillie Morse caught sight of his costume under the folds of an ample overcoat, she cried out:

"Oh, Mr. Langfrew, how delicious! A rabbit! Look, Virginia; did you ever see anything so amusing? Mr. Langfrew has disguised himself as a rabbit—a mauve and yellow rabbit. It's too heavenly!"

The Englishman threw open his coat and placed momentarily before his eyes a mask.

"Would you know me?" he asked.

Virginia was very solemn.

"No, certainly not," she said; "and I consider it very necessary that we *should* know you. You are our escort. There may be hundreds of other rabbits all in mauve and yellow. You must wear some sort of sign, so that we can distinguish you."

"Oh, I say," Langfrew drew back, looking at himself in the glass. "Am I to be spotted, whatever I do?"

"Yes," Lillie laughed. "You've made a martyr of yourself by offering to accompany two helpless females to the masked *Redoute*. I guess you won't have much of a show for yourself to-night, Mr. Langfrew."

Langfrew bowed to Lillie in a gallant manner, which made his rabbit costume all the more ridiculous, and, glancing at the clock on the mantel-piece, which pointed twenty to twelve, he suggested that they start along. From a bouquet of flowers which Eugénie, with the usual sentiment of the French, had placed on the centre table of Mrs. Mumford's hotel *salon*, Sydney Langfrew drew a scarlet geranium. Placing it conspicuously in the buttonhole of his mauve and yellow costume, he said to Virginia:

"There, now, no matter how many rabbits there may be at the *Redoute*, you'll recognize your own faithful, by the little spot of scarlet. Eh? Agreed?"

"You're a perfect brick," Virginia responded, "and that's almost as good as saying, 'You're a true American'!"

"There'll be plenty of true Americans at the show to-night," Langfrew drawled. "Americans are crazy about the *Redoute*. They adore it."

"I hope"—Lillie Morse's tone was somewhat dogged—"I hope there'll be something besides Americans."

"An Italian, for example?" Langfrew suggested.

"Oh, don't be silly," Miss Morse responded.

"Well," the Englishman continued, "the best way to find out what there is at the *Redoute* is to get there as fast as possible."

He led them to the automobile which he had kept waiting at the door of the hotel, and, after rolling for a moment, with the cool sea breeze blowing against their flushed faces, they emerged into the

splendid hall of the Casino, where the warm wave of the heat greeted them like the fumes of some wine which carries with it an intoxication to the brain.

The ball-room was a mass of blazing lights. At either end an orchestra was installed. On the spacious floor the vast crowd circulated, undulating to the rhythm of the music, harmonious in the two colors prescribed by the Committee on Decoration.

The first sensation which Lillie Morse and Mrs. Mumford experienced was one of astonishment. Every one stared at every one else. Recognition was not possible. All the cordiality of the usual wordy reunion was suppressed by the little satin mask which rested, baffling, upon the face, like a stroke of the pen which renders a signature illegible. Then, as they wandered around and around the vast Casino ball-room, Langfrew by their side, the two ladies became more tamed to the first eccentric influences. After all, they were strangers, absolute strangers. Except for two or three acquaintances, they did not need even their masks to disguise them, and the presence of these two or three acquaintances was doubtful. Mrs. Bellamy-Scott, for example, was most horribly bored at the very thought of the carnival. She had gone in for that sort of thing when she was young, very young, she declared, and the mere thought of it now made her *blasée* to a degree! The Count Marcelin shared Mrs. Bellamy-Scott's views on the subject of the *Redoute*. There remained Von Strombitz and Prince Gianotti. Each of the ladies had an especial opinion regarding these possible participators: Virginia Mumford was sure that Von Strombitz would scorn such a general and public sort of ball; Lillie Morse was certain that the Prince, whatever scrape he might be in, would come to the Casino, knowing that he might find her there.

The brilliancy of the scene was wont to foster secret emotions. The heat, the crowd, the music, the strange magic power, and the masks. . . . Ah, here lay the secret of the ball's seduction. The wee little strips of satin, fastened across the bridge of the nose, seemed like so many frontiers traced between one's past and the present moment, between one's own personality and the acts one might accomplish in disguise.

Lillie Morse grew bold. No one could ever recognize her. Of that she was assured. There were a hundred mauve and yellow butterflies, more or less protected, about the room. Why should she not amuse herself? A certain dreadful confidence came over her, and, with an audacity of which she supposed herself incapable, she turned suddenly towards a masked Harlequin who, for some quarter of an hour, had dogged her footsteps. With a feverish impulse, she said now to him, in Italian, the only words she knew:

"Tutto nel mondo è vano."

The mask, drawing nearer to her, finished:

"Nel amor'ogni dolcezza."

Lillie recognized the voice of the Prince.

"I recognize you," she murmured. "You do not need to keep up the disguise. I knew you would come."

The mask leaned a moment toward her, and, lifting one of her hands, pressed it to his lips. This gesture confirmed Lillie in her certainty that the mask was no other than the Prince Gianotti. She forgot Langfrew, she forgot Virginia Mumford, and, following the lead of her new-found escort, she wandered, disappearing at once, in the surging mass of merry-makers.

Watching with amazement this sudden disappearance of Lillie, Virginia Mumford turned confidently to comment upon it to Sydney Langfrew. To her astonishment, her horror, Langfrew also had vanished. She stood alone, quite alone. Her head swam. The blazing lights, the frightful heat, the swarming, whirling throngs, seemed to mount like wine to her brain. She became intoxicated with the spirit of festivity. Her mask, a dangerous accomplice, lent audacity to ardor. And when, a moment later, a tall, straight Pierrot in mauve and yellow leaned forward and murmured through his mask some words of admiration, Virginia yielded to her impulse and accompanied the Pierrot, wandering with him in the gorgeous, moving throng. In a strange, inexplicable way, Virginia felt confidence in this Pierrot.

"Do you know," she said to him, "the people I came with have simply abandoned me, left me to my own resources in this awful crowd!"

She spoke with her natural voice, and with a foreign pronunciation almost unintelligible the Pierrot said:

"Ze fête is vera bretty to-night."

Virginia remained as silent as a stick. The Pierrot went on:

"Ze moments I come in I see you in ze crowd. I zay, 'Zere is ze ladee I look for!' Tell me, tell me, pretty Columbine," he continued, "you stay long time at Nice?"

"Oh, no," Virginia explained; "we came over to Nice to-day. We have been at Monte Carlo."

"At Monte Carlo? Indeed!" The Pierrot's accent was very poignant. "And you return zere to-morrow, my bretty Columbine?"

"No," Virginia blurted out, somewhat *glacée* by this compliment. "We are leaving Monte Carlo to-morrow."

"Tell me, pretty Columbine," the mask said, "where are you going to-morrow?"

"Oh, to Paris," Virginia responded naïvely. "I'm going to Paris." Then, with a demure inspiration, she added: "I'm to meet my husband there—to-morrow."

She was horrified at herself at this sudden frankness which her mask seemed to inspire. Why tell a stranger these intimate matters? But was it a stranger? She was almost sure—— Was it not—she could not be mistaken—Von Strombitz? Disguised as a Harlequin? The mask was pressing, very pressing.

"Tell me," he insisted. "You go to-morrow to Paris?"

"Yes," Virginia nodded timidly.

"You stay at the hotel?"

"Meurice," Virginia again nodded, not knowing how, thus uncontrolled, she could give even the address of her hotel in Paris.

"But tell me, dearest Columbine!" It seemed to Virginia that she had never heard an accent so poignant. She was at the same time enchanted and miserable. "Tell me," the Pierrot went on, "you will let me zee you in Parees?"

Virginia shook her head violently.

"No, no," she cried; "I can't possibly."

The band was playing a maddening waltz, the rhythm of which beat against Virginia's heart with a strange thrill, as if to say to her, "You are free!"

But she steadied herself. The dear old memories swept back upon her. She recalled the first evening she had ever danced with Hal Mumford. He was but a college boy, and she a girl in her teens. Those were disguises, too, she thought, those early years of inexperience. But when Hal took off his mask and laid it down before her, she had loved him more than ever, the real Hal. She thought of him so tenderly now.

"Ah, *Madame*," the Pierrot pleaded in his strange, broken English, "zay zat I may at least zee you once again, when you are wissout a mask; zat I may zee you once in Parees, when you shall have no Columbine costume, only your own sweet gown upon you—zay zis. Zay it! Wissout, I shall not live!"

Mrs. Mumford shook herself free of the hand which lay against her arm.

"Listen to me," the Pierrot continued. "Whatever you may decide, listen to me. I go to-night to Parees. I wait for you zere. I be every day at the Grand Hotel. I wait for you. I zit each afternoon from four o'clock until zix in ze big hall where music plays."

Virginia's brain had begun to whirl. She wanted to be rid of this insistent mask who, for some reason she could not explain, by the very accent of his voice was sympathetic to her. She wanted him out of her sight. She wanted to join the others. But where were they? Where had Lillie disappeared? Where had Langfrew gone? It was frightful being thus abandoned in a monstrous ball-room, with masses of indifferent masks around one, and an insidious Pierrot too near alto-

gether. Virginia shuddered; a horrible inclination to cry swept over her.

But at this moment a general movement of the throng directed her attention toward the box where the judges sat. There, at the instant when the prizes were to be awarded, she perceived, standing before the jury, a butterfly in yellow and mauve, with a mass of golden hair bound under a cap that encircled her fair brow. The butterfly stood between a Harlequin and a mauve and yellow rabbit. Though the judges' box was some distance from Mrs. Mumford, she fancied she could distinguish a flash of red in the rabbit's buttonhole. Without further ceremony, she fled.

Her Pierrot? She heeded him no further.

One thought alone prompted her to rapid action. Lillie Morse, the cause of all her anxiety, had taken the prize. She was being awarded by the judge the recompense for the most successful costume at the *Redoute* Ball. In another moment she would be unmasked. Then it would be too late. Virginia Mumford swept onward, upward, losing the Pierrot. Arrived at the judges' box, she precipitated herself into "the artistic midst," and, with a few rapid words in English, drew the mauve and yellow butterfly with her. Langfrew, horribly bored at this anti-climax, reluctantly followed. It was only when all three were again settled in the Englishman's automobile that Mrs. Mumford cried:

"Oh, please, to the hotel, as fast as we can go. I've had enough of *Redoutes* and carnivals! Lillie Morse, we leave for Paris on the fast express to-morrow morning!"

Langfrew deposited the two ladies at their hotel and prepared to take leave of them.

"I say, not off really to-morrow for Paris, are you? Why this *frousse*? Nobody recognized you at the ball, don't you know. It was so jolly, Miss Morse's taking that prize, I say!"

"We're leaving to-morrow without fail. Don't even urge us to stay another hour in this awful place," Virginia Mumford cried.

"But, I say," Langfrew persisted, "you're going to let me have your address? I'm going to Paris myself, don't you know, in a day or two."

"The Meurice," Miss Morse said.

And Virginia repeated:

"Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli. Good night, and thanks ever so much for all your kindness."

"Oh, I say," Langfrew was still murmuring as the two ladies vanished at the end of the long hotel corridor.

Once in their rooms, Virginia showed a decided tendency to weep.

"Oh, Lillie," she said, "I've done the most awful thing!"

"Virginia, brace up," Lillie remonstrated. "Don't be a perfect watering-pot."

Virginia continued to wail.

"I've just about made a rendezvous with a man I don't even know. It's too awful! Oh, why did we ever come to this dreadful, dreadful place?"

"You've just about made a rendezvous, and you're almost in tears? You perfect goose, look at me. I've made one, a bona fide rendezvous, with a man I've never even seen without a mask, and I'm as cheery as a cricket."

"Lillie Morse, you awful thing!" Virginia removed her handkerchief from her half-wet eyes, and looked out curiously at her companion. "Don't you even know who the man is?"

"No."

"Not even his nationality?"

"Yes, I know that."

"He is Italian!" Virginia smiled.

"Well, there's where you make the first mistake," Miss Morse retorted. "He's no more Italian than I am. He's an American."

"I thought it was the Prince," Mrs. Mumford explained, drawing off her gloves and beginning to let down her hair, preparatory to an all-night talk. "You don't mean to say," she added, "that that yellow and purple Harlequin was an American?"

"Yes, I do."

But Lillie did not add that the purple and yellow Harlequin was not only *an* American, but *the* American whom her heart coveted.

"How did you find out he was an American?" Virginia questioned.

"Just by talking to him. He knows a little Italian, but I could tell right away by his accent he was n't a real one."

"Oh, how exciting! Go on, do!"

"There's nothing to 'go on' about." Lillie was very cold-blooded. "He's fearfully attractive. I like him better than any man I've ever met. That's all. The rest is 'to be continued in our next.'"

"But, my dear," Virginia queried, "you don't even know him?"

"What difference does that make? As a rule, the more you know people, the less you like them."

"Well," Virginia sighed, "I can't keep pace with you at all;" and she busied herself weaving into long braids the soft tresses of her hair, while Lillie took her turn at questioning.

"Look here," she said, "you have n't actually made a rendezvous with a man you don't know? I am a free girl. It's different with me. There's no one who has a right to criticise if I meet a strange man any day I like at the Grand Hotel in Paris."

"Grand Hotel in Paris!" Virginia gasped.

"Yes. Is there anything so extraordinary in that?"

"Oh, Lillie, don't be so severe," Mrs. Mumford pleaded. "It's such a strange coincidence. It just happens that the Grand Hotel is the place where the—the Pierrot—said he would 'wait for me every day' until I came."

"The more the merrier," Lillie murmured.

"But I'm not really going to the rendezvous."

"Don't you *want* to?" Lillie asked.

"Of course I don't want to"—Virginia's tone was indignant. But in a moment she resumed meditatively: "I never heard such an attractive voice as that Pierrot had!"

Seeing Virginia become sentimental, Lillie reverted to practical matters.

"What time did you say the train leaves to-morrow for Paris?"

"Well, there's a fast train in the morning. But we can't possibly catch it. Eugénie's in bed, and I haven't told her a thing about our starting so suddenly."

"Do you suppose we could make the one o'clock P.L.M. express? They say it's the fastest train in France."

"Yes, I guess we can catch that."

"It's three A.M." Lillie bent and kissed Mrs. Mumford good-night; but Virginia made no move toward preparing for bed.

"Aren't you even sleepy," Lillie yawned, "after all this excitement?"

"I don't know whether I am or not. But I want to write to Hal before I go to bed. I can't rest another hour without telling him what has happened."

Lillie shook her head, and, yawning again, she murmured:

"Oh dear, I'm glad I'm not married!"

XI.

"HALF past four, Virginia! Just time for tea. Come, dry your eyes. Dash a spray of cold water over them, and let's walk around to the Ritz for tea."

It was the second day after the ladies' arrival in Paris from Monte Carlo, but Mrs. Mumford always was wretched and full of apprehension when without news from her husband.

"Just the same," Virginia proffered, when they were served and had begun upon their *gouter*, "I do sort of wonder where the Prince Gianotti is at this moment. Langfrew said that night at Monte Carlo that he was in trouble."

Across Lillie's mind there flashed again the recollection of her drive with Gianotti, down the steep Corniche.

In trouble?

She saw before them, as he stood that night, the dark and menacing peasant who barred their way, and to whom, for the sake of momentary peace, she had thrown her little Cartier purse . . . such a beauty! She would never see it again. Of this she was now quite sure. After that first meeting, Prince Gianotti had never alluded to the ransom she had paid to save them from a tragic fate.

"I suppose," Virginia went on prosaically, "that princes have no end of resources, when by chance they are in trouble."

Lillie made no response to this inconsequent remark, and Virginia, stimulated and refreshed by her first cup of tea, continued: "It certainly would be rather amusing to become a princess. After you've been abroad even a short time, you get a hankering after titles, just like Gertie Bellamy-Scott. She's simply mad about nobility."

"Yes, that's perfectly true. But we ought n't to judge her. She's been so unhappily married."

Lillie broke up this reminiscence. The question of happy or unhappy marriages was sure to stir Virginia once more to tears, and any place, Lillie felt, was more appropriate for weeping than the Ritz Hotel at five o'clock on a March afternoon.

"I say," she cried, imitating the English drawl, "I'll be—well, I don't know what—if that is n't Sydney Langfrew wandering there by the door."

Mrs. Mumford twisted her head about and confirmed Lillie's certainty.

"It is he, as sure as I'm alive."

As if by some magnetic current, Langfrew's gaze was drawn toward Mrs. Mumford and Miss Morse. With one long stride, he found himself at their side, and with a cordial handshake he declared his joy at seeing them.

"This is jolly! I say, and so unexpected!"

"How did you leave Mrs. Bellamy-Scott?" asked Mrs. Mumford.

"All cut up about your departure." Langfrew giggled. Then, looking straight at Lillie, he said: "Shall I be awfully indiscreet?"

"Yes, do!" There was a chorus from the ladies.

"Well, you know, for some time Mrs. Bellamy-Scott has been fishing in international seas to find just the right sort of wife for Gianotti." Langfrew sipped from his cup while Virginia darted a glance at Lillie Morse. Then he went on: "I don't want to be *too* personal, you know, but I really do believe she'd quite set her *hameçon*, her baited hook, don't you know, on——"

Two female voices were lifted in an inquisitive:

"On?"

"Well"—Langfrew giggled into his teacup—"on one of you ladies. The younger of you. On, in fact, Miss Morse."

Lillie Morse, sitting violently upright, bristled with indignation. "I never heard of such audacity!"

"Why, yes," Langfrew went on. "You see, she counted on the Prince's behaving himself, at least until she got this international union consummated; but she, as it were, don't you know, she reckoned without her host. Gianotti is an old hand at ruses of all sorts. He simply could n't hold out, as it were. It's public property, the scandal he got into, so I don't need to make any bones of it."

Lillie's mind reverted instinctively to their pursuer on the Grand Corniche, and as the Englishman continued she grew a trifle paler.

"Yes," Sydney Langfrew drawled; "everything depends on the way a thing is done. Gianotti is a *grand seigneur*, of course. There's no better nobility in Italy. Only, he's a bit careless in the use of his privileges. He's mistaken *use* for *abuse*. He fancied that '*noblesse oblige*' meant all the '*noblesse*' on his side, and all the obligation on the other fellow's."

As he babbled on, Lillie saw the whole drama unrolled like a bit of tragedy before her: the dusky peasant on the Grand Corniche, the shadow who pursued them in the half-deserted village of Laturbie, and, above all, the little wet and miserable heap the *gens d'armes* had drawn from the Seine that wintry morning when she strolled on the Quai with Bedford.

She shuddered, with the sensation of passing near a precipice into which she might so easily have fallen.

"Do go on, Mr. Langfrew," she urged.

"Where was I?" the Englishman drawled. "Oh, yes, so poor, these poor Italians. We must n't judge them as we would an Anglo-Saxon. They are, so Gianotti says himself, a trifle decadent. A little over-ripe, been hanging too long on the tree, as it were."

"What became of that poor girl?" Lillie Morse persisted.

"I say, now, how nice of you to be so interested in that girl! I supposed you would want to know what had become of the Prince." Langfrew laughed. "He's gone off to some high mountain top of the Tyrol, where some relatives of his mother have a property. The Monte Carlo police gave him to understand he'd better, as you say in the States, 'get a move on him.'"

When the two women were again alone, Virginia sighed heavily. "It seems too awful, the whole thing, does n't it?" she asked Lillie, who looked at her and nodded: "All the *noblesse* on their side, and all the obligation on ours!"

XII.

At the Meurice the following day, a little envelope was handed to Virginia, restoring her to exhilarant satisfaction. The letter was from Hal, but before she could read it, Lillie, taking advantage of her

friend's absent-minded mood, hurried her off to hear the music at the Grand Hotel.

"I don't care where you take me," Virginia laughed, "now that I've heard from him."

The hall of the hotel was crowded, and Lillie, with a knowing little smile, withdrew into the writing-room, leaving Virginia alone to read the cherished letter. She read and studied, pondered and calculated. Hal would be in Paris that very night. Then she could put her arms about his neck, and show him how she adored him, tell him everything, everything. Dearest Hal!

But as if Fate wished to add to the already burdened list which Virginia designated in this general "everything," while she thought over all her foolishness since Hal had left her, a voice by her side, quite close to her on the little bench where she had sat down to wait for Lillie Morse, spoke her name, and with the sound of this voice a thrill ran over Mrs. Mumford. The voice said:

"Please look at me. Please speak to me. I do you no harm."

The English was the same broken English, the intonation was identical. No, she could not mistake it; it was——

"Turn and look at me," the voice entreated.

But Virginia didn't need to turn; she knew who sat beside her: it was the mask she had encountered at the *Redoute* Ball. A strange trembling took possession of her, shook her like a chill.

"Every day," the voice went on, pleading tenderly, "I wait here for you. From four until six I am here, waiting, loving," he added, in a more than ever ardent tone.

Without looking at him, Virginia felt, more than saw, that he had a long black mustache, that he was tall and powerfully built. She could not see the color of his eyes, and everything, in fact, seemed blurred and hazy by the emotion which his voice caused her. Oh, would Lillie Morse *never* return? What could she be doing in that little writing-room? Virginia dared not turn in that direction, as her *Redoute* friend sat, full and square, between her and the corner whence her only chance of rescue might appear.

"Please," she said in a very low voice, without lifting her head, "I beg of you, really. It's not gallant to annoy a woman in this way."

The voice was even nearer to her ear as it answered:

"Just one look, just one, *Signora*."

"How can you persist? A woman alone, too. It is most frightfully inconsiderate." She drew herself away, preparing to rise and flee. The voice drew nearer, nearer. Then, with a bound, Virginia was out of her seat and had started across the hall.

"How dreadful!" she cried, almost running. The swinging doors opened their wings to her. She was flung out upon the pavement of

the Boulevards, and, darting on amid the throng of vehicles, she found her way, headlong, breathless, to the Rue des Capucines, over the Place Vendome, into the Rue de Rivoli. Here under the sheltering arcades so near to the Hotel Meurice, it seemed to her that she was safe. But no sooner had she faltered than the voice, again by her side, whispered:

"Lillie, my love, my dove, why hurry so? You are in no danger."

These words added wings to her already flying feet, and with one leap she was in the corridor of the Hotel Meurice. Not stopping to take the elevator, she sped up the stairs, down the hall to their apartment. Drawing her skirts in with a swift turn, she flung open the door, and for a moment she faced the Pierrot, with his sweeping, bushy mustache. Then, sinking helplessly down on the divan, nervous, lonely, and with an outraged sense of the injustice of the incident, she rocked herself back and forth, disconsolate.

Suddenly she ceased to lament. Her eye became fixed on the stranger, and with indignation she cried:

"Hal Mumford! I recognized you long ago!"

Hal, smiling, put his arm lovingly around Virginia, but she pushed him away.

"What I demand now," she declared, "is an explanation."

"An explanation of what?" he asked, drawing off his bushy mustache and laughing outright.

"How did you happen to be at the Nice carnival?" Feeling somewhat ridiculous at the position in which this adventure had placed her, Virginia let her anger rise to submerge her wounded vanity.

"It seems to me," her husband suggested, "that if there is any explanation to be made, it ought to come from you."

"It was n't my fault," Virginia pouted. "Lillie insisted upon my going with her to Monte Carlo."

"You might have written me, at least, don't you think so?—that Miss Morse had become your guardian angel, instead of having Carlton Mason to give me the latest family news."

"That horrid Mr. Mason! I knew he would write you the first thing."

"He could scarcely suppose there was any secret to be kept. I should not have believed it myself a few weeks ago."

A sad note had rung out in Mumford's voice, and Virginia, softening, listened with less defiance to her husband. He went on: "A month ago you could n't have made me believe that Virginia, my Virginia, would feel the necessity for a—a—an intrigue of this sort. Just like Gertie Bellamy-Scott, or any other unhappily married woman."

"Hal!" Virginia protested.

He looked at her.

"I thought I made you happy, truly happy. I was a fool, I suppose. But how can a man know what's in a woman's heart?"

"Oh, Hal"—Virginia drew close to him, but he now moved away. "Promise that you'll never leave me again. I acted like an idiot, but you forgive me, don't you?"

Mumford looked long and tenderly at his wife.

"Yes," he said; "I forgive you. There was no harm in what you did. It was only your hiding it from me that I resent. And for the rest, I guess I can defend my honor."

These words he pronounced with a bitterness which startled Virginia.

"How defend your honor?" she asked, leaning against him appealingly.

He took her hands in his and kissed them. Then he got up and began to pace about the room.

"It's the consequence of their acts that women never consider," he began in a serious manner, which Virginia did not know. "The great feminine cry is, 'I meant no harm.' The woman breaks a man's heart—meaning no harm. She destroys the hearth that he has founded and warmed with his very life's blood, but she means no harm. She squanders his hard-earned final penny, but she means no harm. She shatters his soul-saving faith in her—meaning no harm. Only seeking diversion, oblivious of results."

Virginia had never heard Hal speak like this before. It seemed to her she had never loved him so much. And her heart ached so!

"You meant no harm, of course," he went on, tossing the ashes from the cigarette he had lighted, as he paced slowly up and down. "But you did n't suppose," he asked, "that I was going to let matters stand unexplained with that Austrian fellow, did you?—who, by the way, is no more a count or a baron than I am!"

"Hal, what do you mean?" Virginia pleaded.

"I mean just this." He had stopped before the mantel-piece, his back to the fireplace. Virginia watched him anxiously. "I mean that I asked an explanation from Von Strombitz, and that——"

"That——?"

There was a pause before Hal brought out slowly:

"That we are to fight a duel to-morrow."

"Hal!" Her cry was like a sob. "You can't do this. You must n't. It is n't right. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, not even the least flirtation, between me and that horrible man. Please, Hal!" She wrung her hands.

"You may have considered it nothing. He did n't," Hal answered. "I happened to go into a restaurant at Nice the night of the *Redoute* Ball. There were some men dining at the table next. Towards the

end of dinner, I heard your name spoken. It was this Austrian. He was telling of his American 'flirt.' I did n't wait for him to get any further. I struck him with my glove full across the brow. A good horsewhipping would have satisfied me better, but their sense of honor is peculiar, and, above all, coward that he is, nothing would terrify him so as to have to face the pistol."

"Pistol!" Virginia cried.

"Yes, I chose the weapon. He has first shot."

"Oh, no!" The tears were rolling down Virginia's cheeks. "Can't you force him to ask your pardon? Show that he is sorry? Make reparation of some sort?"

"A man's honor," Mumford said, "is something women can't understand. This man is a foreigner. I want him to atone according to his ideas, not mine."

Late into the night Virginia pleaded, argued, in vain, and when, toward dawn, she woke from a light sleep into which she had fallen at last from exhaustion, Hal was already dressing. He was making ready for the encounter, at which she could not even be present. She watched him with dull misery, and when he bent over to take leave of her it seemed as if there were a chill on his lips, like the chill of death.

When the door had closed behind him, she fell to sobbing, and during the morning hours she waited in anguish. Every step in the hall sounded heavy to her, as if shuffling under the weight of some burden. Lillie Morse sat by her side, waited with her, but neither of the women spoke. At last came the dread noise of hurried feet treading stealthily. Lillie flung open the door. The doctor, Bedford, and one of the young secretaries from the Embassy, who had acted as second, came in, bearing Hal, who was unconscious from loss of blood. He had been wounded, but not very seriously, as the bullet had glanced off, after striking one of his ribs. The doctor was grave, but reassuring. He had sent for a nurse, who would help Virginia to bring him soon back to health.

Virginia gazed at her husband's face, as he lay silent, beseeching him inwardly to forgive her, to get well for her sake, and quickly.

When, finally, he opened his eyes, he lifted one arm to place it about her neck. He drew her down, kissing her, and whispered, "Virginia, forgive me."

A rush of happiness welled back into her heart at these words. Heaven be praised, Hal would live!

She motioned to Bedford and Lillie to leave her now with the nurse who had arrived.

Late that afternoon, when the doctor had pronounced Hal on the rapid mend, Bedford found Lillie alone in their little *salon*. It was what he had most hoped for.

He shut the door tight, and, bending over her, he asked: "Have you told them yet?"

"I could n't," Lillie whispered. "Everything has been so tragic since last night, I could n't speak of my own happiness. I could n't bring myself to tell Virginia that we became engaged at the very *Redoute* Ball where——"

"Lillie," he murmured, "say again that you are happy."

"It might spoil you," Lillie smiled, "if you heard it too often."

"Look here," Bedford asked, "there's something I want to ask of you. You remember the first day we went out to walk together in Paris?"

"Yes." Lillie shuddered slightly.

"Was it so horrible as that?"

"Oh, no, I was very happy, only our pleasure was marred by that poor half-drowned girl whom we saw—the one who tried to kill herself." Again with multiple recollections, Lillie shuddered. Bedford put his arm through hers.

"Dearest," he murmured, "forget everything but our happiness. That miserable day a month ago, when I was to leave you, we went to the Quai Voltaire and gazed up at my sixth-floor balcony. Will you come back there with me now?"

When Lillie had put on her things, Bedford huddled her close to his side, along the Rue de Rivoli, over the familiar way that led across the bridge. Yielding, in this first great wave of abandon, she swept along with him to the Quai Voltaire, to the sombre entrance of No. 9, and then up the dark and mildewed staircase. Up, up, up, until at last they reached the topmost floor, and Bedford, opening his own front door with a key, ushered Miss Morse into his apartments. A faint streak of light—the early spring twilight—enlivened by the moon, spread a path of silver across the eyrie studio. The half-draped manikin in the corner drooped its listless arms, like some defeated character that has renounced all claims to life. The easel, the chair, and the palette beside it, all seemed spectral in the semi-obscurity.

"Dearest," he said, "are you happy here?"

Lillie had reached the little window open on the balcony; she stepped out, not heeding what Bedford said to her, and he, half desperate with the joy her presence brought him, followed, encircling her with his arms, leaning with her against the iron rail of the sixth-floor balcony.

"How beautiful the river is!" Lillie whispered. Her face was so close to his, she could feel him gently touch her cheek with his lips as he answered:

"You can't think how often I've stood on this balcony and just longed and longed for you, Lillie."

"If I'd only known!" She turned toward him radiantly, with something shy in the smile which illumined her face.

"But you *did* know once," Bedford nodded. "Well, what would you have done, if you had known, darling?"

"I should have kept out of that other affair."

"Which other affair?"

"Why, the one with the Italian prince whom I might have married."

"Don't say '*might* have married,'" Bedford pleaded. "That makes it sound so awfully possible."

Lillie waited a moment, then she said:

"No, it was n't possible, not one bit possible."

"You mean, because of the contemptible way the Prince acted about that poor girl?"

"Have you heard about that, too?" Lillie asked, amazed.

"Yes, of course. Every one on the Riviera was talking about it."

"Oh!" she cried, close to his side. "It seems so strange to think of that sort of frivolous life going on always. Virginia got a letter to-day from Mrs. Bellamy-Scott. She's cross with us for having left so suddenly." She laughed with the radiant flash of her white teeth, and Bedford stooped and kissed her.

"I'm happy now!" she whispered to him.

"You don't regret not being a princess? Just plain American Mrs.?"

Lillie drew away.

"You ought to say that I'm a queen, the queen of your heart."

"Darling, you are!"

"Yes, I am, but you're a little late giving me the title. And now"—she shook her finger at him—"there is one thing you must understand." She hesitated a moment, and then, hiding her face in her hands, she laughed. "Before I begin to be so serious, I've got an awful confession to make."

The young man bent forward eagerly.

"Yes," she said, whispering the words, and laughing at the same time; "I just simply can't call you '*Alonzo*.' It is *too Italian!* And another thing I want you to know is that long before I ever heard of the Prince Gianotti's cowardly behavior about that poor girl, I refused him."

"You did!"

"Yes."

"Because you did n't love him?"

"Partly."

"Partly?" Bedford echoed.

"Yes; but principally because"—she put both arms around her

lover's neck—"principally because all the time I was in love with you."

Bedford led her gently into the room. "Stay here just a moment before we go back to the hotel," he urged. "I want to see you in the old studio where I've struggled so hard to do something that would make you proud of me."

"It's so peaceful here," Lillie said. She had sat down in a sweeping arm-chair. Bedford drew up a little low tabouret, and sat at her feet, speaking to her in low tones of love.

"I'm so happy," she sighed. "I could stay forever here in this old moonlit studio, feeling you near me, where I need only reach out my arms to touch you. Everything else seems millions of miles away."

Down on the Quai a poor street singer had stationed himself. His voice, sonorous and vibrant, reached the two lovers in their lofty dwelling. Lillie grew meditative as she listened, and, all eagerness, she cried:

"Do you know what that is he's singing? It's the *Dolcezza*. I love the words. I don't think I ever knew really what they meant before." And she repeated:

"All is vain under the sun;
In love lies every happiness."

Bedford folded her in his arms. She was his. And she was happy to be his. He took from her lips a long kiss, in which, while the sweet air of the *Dolcezza* enveloped them, he touched the soul of his beloved.



Ariadne Adams.

IS FRIEND.

Ariadne Adams might truly be called a fortunate girl. She was piquante enough to have been wicked, but she was very good; she was good enough to have been ugly, but she was captivat-

ingly pretty; she was pretty enough to have been poor, but she was paralyzingly rich—so rich that she might have done up her bangs in Government 4's and no one would have objected; for her father was a bankrupt by profession, and invariably broke for ten cents on the dollar.

One might think there was nothing to add to these advantages; but Ariadne had more. She possessed a troop of devoted friends, of all ages, both sexes, and differing conditions of servitude, of whom this narrative concerns only a few young gentlemen. She managed to keep them all happy, and enjoyed to the full the various kinds of pleasure they afforded her, for a long time preventing any proposals on their part, which she was most anxious to avoid, since she loved none of them. Nevertheless, she was in love. This is often so. Alcides Munroe, the fortunate object of her passion, didn't appear to reciprocate. This, too, is often so—perhaps oftener. And the more she adored him, the more he didn't adore her. This is the oftenest of all.

Matters approached a crisis. Ariadne was altogether too fascinating to allow her masculine friends to remain friends any longer, and they became—not enemies, but something almost as bad—lovers, in fact. And when a young lady's lovers are not what she wants, and yet give her no end of pleasure as friends, it is hard for her to refuse them and thus lose their society forever.

One morning Ariadne was sitting in careless thought and ditto *déshabillé*, when George J. Fisher was announced. George was a produce-broker, and knew beans and all other vegetables intimately. He was always well supplied with money, but particularly so at this time—the fresh, just-opening summer-time, when

his country customers were sending in large consignments of early green peas. This wealth he spent in driving Ariadne out in remarkably fine style. He made the object of his affections what might be called a business man's proposal, and awaited the result.

"Alas, Mr. Fisher," said she: "I must decline. I do not love you; I can be only a sister to you."

"That wasn't at all the relationship he wished to stand in to her. He said so, and left."

"My delightful drives are at an end!" sighed Ariadne.

Then there was another arrival. Karl Friedrich Christian Ohrspelter, the celebrated musician and pianist, who used to play Wagner to her as long as the instrument held out, and then sing until the police interfered. On one occasion he had fought a desperate battle with the "Götterdämmerung," and had three pianos shot under him. He proposed in

the florid Gothic style. She said:

"Alas, Herr Ohrspelter, I must decline. I do not love you; but you shall find in me a cousin."

He was not satisfied, either, and departed in wrath.

Ariadne looked sad. "The music of the future is the music of the past for me," said she.

Another arrival. There seemed to be an erratic epidemic in progress. This time it was a talented young dramatist. He was very successful in composing original plays, because he read French with ease. With him Ariadne had attended many a "first night," and acquired a vast knowledge of things theatrical. His declaration was adapted bodily from the last Paris success, and did credit alike to his feelings and his memory.

Ariadne repeated her former speech, and suggested that he should regard her as an aunt.

But he refused. "I have adapted almost everything," said he: "but I cannot adapt myself to such a situation as this."

He immediately folded his tent, like the Arabs, and quietly adapted away.

There was no more theatre for Ariadne.

Next came her artistic adorer, who had painted a large number of plaques and screens for her, as a slight testimonial of his love. He had also executed a magnificent painting on the hall-floor, choosing this singular place because all his other pictures had been "skied" to such an extent that it was a real pleasure to have one, at least, as far away from the

ceiling as possible. He didn't by any means take kindly to Ariadne's proposition that he should consider her his niece.

Then her saltatory slave, the best waltzer she knew, put in an appearance, and wouldn't listen to her offer of a second-cousinship; nor did her muscular mash, who could run a mile in five minutes, and had the largest biceps ever seen off of a gorilla, with whom she attended all sorts of athletic games, wish her to be his third-cousin, which was all she had to give, her stock of relationships being closed out.

When she was finally left alone, she reflected bitterly that every source of amusement and all her best escorts were lost to her because she had been too fascinating.

The question now arose in her mind whether she was fascinating enough—enough to obtain the long-desired, yet never-obtained, affections of Alcides Munroe. He was sure of a favorable answer if he proposed, since, as she thought, there was nothing she could be to him except his wife without infringing on the patent of one of his predecessors.

At this moment he entered, amply provided with manly beauty, immense wealth, splendid talents, and everything else necessary for the equipment of a first-class, super-extra hero.

If this is not sufficient, order what you please and have it charged.

He made his appearance in great agitation and a new spring suit. In fact, he was so very much agitated that he had forgotten to remove the price-mark from his collar—but, as the figures were tolerably high ones for a ready-made article, it didn't make so much difference.

"Ariadne," said he: "this is the most momentous day of my life."

"And of mine," she whispered.

"Ariadne," he continued: "I am dazzlingly happy."

"Me too!" cooed she.

"Ariadne, I am about to—"

"I know it."

"You have always been—"

"I have!"

"And always will—"

"Can you ask?"

"Be my friend?"

"What?"

"Yes, my friend. It is to you that I first communicate my felicity. Honoria has at last consented, and next month will see us united—consolidated, as it were, agreeing to pool our receipts forever upon an equitable percentage, and never to cut rates. Wish me joy!"

But Ariadne had fainted. She had been too fascinating, yet not quite enough so—and she was Alcides's friend.



The Best Waltzer.



The Young Dramatist.



George J. Fisher.



Her Artistic Adorer.



Her Muscular Mash.

JEREMY

BY HUGH WALPOLE

(Continued)

CHAPTER XI

Mary

§ 1

Mary Cole had been, all her life, that thing beloved of the sentimental novelist, a misunderstood child. Had she been good-looking as Helen or independent as Jeremy, she would either have attracted the world in general or have been indifferent as to whether she attracted it or no. She might have found consolation in books or her own highly colored imaginings, had it not been for the burning passions which she formed, at a very early age, for living people. For some years now her life had centered round her brother Jeremy. Had the Coles been an observant family they might, perhaps, have found some pathos in the way in which Mary, with her pale, sallow complexion, her pear-shaped face with its dull grey eyes, her enormous glasses, her lanky, colorless hair and thin, bony figure, gazed at her masculine and independent brother. Uncle Samuel might have noticed but he was occupied with his painting.

Mary was only seven years of age

but she had the capacity for being hurt of a person of thirty. When somebody said, "Now, Mary, hurry up. You're always so slow", she was hurt. If Helen told her that she was selfish, she was hurt and would sit wondering whether she were selfish or no. If Mrs. Cole said that she must brush her hair more carefully she was hurt, and when Jeremy said anything sharp to her she was in an agony. Her devotion to her brother grew with every month of her life. She thought him, in all honesty, the most miraculous of human beings. There was more in her worship than mere doglike fidelity. She adored him for reasons that were real and true—for his independence, his obstinacy, his sense of fun, his sudden unexpected kindnesses, his sudden helplessness, and above all for his bravery. He seemed to her the bravest hero in all history, and she felt it the more because she was herself compact of every fear and terror known to man—it was not enough for her the ordinary panic that belongs to all human life at every stage of its prog-

ress. She knew that she could do everything twice as fast as Jeremy and Helen, that she was often so impatient of their slow progress at lessons that she would beat her foot on the ground in a kind of agonized impatience. She knew that she was clever, and she wondered sometimes why her cleverness did not give her more advantages. Why, for instance, should Helen's good looks be noticed at once by every visitor and her own cleverness be unnoticed? Certainly on occasions, her mother would say: "And Mary? I don't think you've met Mary. Come and say how do you do, Mary. Mary is the clever one of the family!" But it was always said in a deprecating, apologetic tone that made Mary hang her head and hate both herself and her mother.

She told herself stories of the time when Jeremy would have to depend entirely upon the splendor of her brains for his delivery from some horror—death, torture, or disgrace. At present such a time was, she was bound to confess to herself, very distant. He depended upon no one for anything; he could not be said to need Mary's assistance in any particular. And with this burning desire of hers came, of course, jealousy. Had you told Mrs. Cole, good mother though she was, that her daughter Mary, aged seven, suffered tortures through jealousy, she would have assured you that it was not in reality jealousy but rather indigestion, and that a little cod-liver oil would put it right.

Mary, with a wisdom greatly beyond her years, realized very quickly that this was some sort of horrible disease with which she must wrestle alone.

Jeremy was, of course, sublimely unaware of the matter: he knew that

Mary was silly sometimes, but he attributed that to her sex: he went on his way, happily indifferent whether anyone cared for him or no. . . . Mary suffered agonies when, as sometimes happened, he sat with his arm round Helen's neck and his cheek up against hers. She suffered when, in a mood of tempestuous affection to the whole world, he kissed Miss Jones. She even suffered when he sat at his mother's feet while she read "The Dove in the Eagle's Nest" or "Engel the Fearless". Most of all, however, she suffered over Hamlet. She knew that at this present time, Hamlet was the one creature for whom Jeremy passionately cared. Matters were made worse by the undoubted truth that Hamlet did not care very much for Mary—that is, he never gave any signs of caring and very often walked out of the room when she came into it. Mary could have cared for the dog as enthusiastically as Jeremy did—she was always sentimental about animals; but now she was shut out from their alliance and she knew that when she came up to them and began to pat or stroke Hamlet, Jeremy was annoyed and Hamlet's skin wriggled in a kind of retreating fashion under her fingers. Wise people will say that it is impossible for this to be a serious trouble to a child. It was increasingly serious to Mary.

Jeremy was not, perhaps, so tactful as he might have been. "Oh bother, Mary!" he would say, "you've gone and waked Hamlet up!", or "Don't stroke Hamlet that way, Mary! He hates it!", or "No, I'm going for a walk with Hamlet. We don't want anyone". Or Hamlet himself would suddenly bark at her as though he hated her, or would bare his teeth and grin at her in a mocking, sarcastic way that he had. Her

jealousy of the dog grew apace, and with that jealousy unfortunately her secret appreciation of his splendors. She could not help admitting to herself that he was the most attractive dog in the world. She would look at him from under her spectacles when she was supposed to be reading, and watch him as he rolled, kicking his legs in the air; or as he lay stretched out, his black wet nose against his paws, his eyes gleaming, his gaze fixed—like the point of a dagger raised to strike,—upon some trophy, or enemy, or spoil; or as he sat, solemn and pompous, like the Lord Mayor holding a meeting as Jeremy said, up against his master's leg, square and solid as though he were cut out of wood, his peaked beard supercilious, his very ears at a patronizing angle; or, as Mary loved best of all to see him, when he was simply childish, playing as though he was still a new-found puppy with pieces of paper or balls or string, rolling and choking, growling, purring, staggering and tumbling. At such times, again and again, her impulse would be to go forward and applaud him, and then the instinct that she would be checked by Jeremy stayed her.

As this year grew toward summer, Mary had the feeling that Jeremy was slipping away from her. In the old days he had asked her opinion about many things, he seemed to enjoy the long stories that she had told him—at any rate he had listened to them very politely,—and he had asked her to suggest games or to play with his toys. Now, as the summer drew near, he did none of these things. Was he growing very conceited? Was it because he was going to school and thought himself too old for his sisters? No, it was rather as though

he lately had thoughts of his own, almost against his will, and that these shut him off from the people round him.

At last just before they all moved to Cow Farm, Mary made a silly scene. One evening she was sitting deep in Charlotte Mary, and Hamlet, bunched up against his master's leg, stared at her. She had long ago told herself that it was ridiculous to mind what Hamlet did, that he was not looking at her and, in any case, he was only a dog—and so on. But to-night she was tired and had read so long that her head ached—Hamlet was laughing at her, his eyes stared through his hair at her, cynically, superciliously, contemptuously. His lip curled and his beard bristled. . . . Moved by a sudden wild impulse she picked up "The Chaplet of Pearls" and threw it at him. It hit him (not very severely) and he gave the sharp melodramatic howl that he always used when it was his dignity rather than his body that was hurt. Jeremy looked up, saw what had happened, and a fine scene followed. Mary had hysterics, stamped and screamed and howled. Jeremy, his face white, stood and said nothing but looked as though he hated her, which at that moment he undoubtedly did. It was that look which more than anything else in the world she dreaded. . . .

She made herself sick with crying, then apologized with an abjection that only irritated him the more—finally she remembered the smallest details of the affair long after he had forgotten all about it.

§ 2

During the first weeks at Cow Farm Mary was happy. At first Jeremy was kind and considerate. He was so happy that he did not mind what any-

one did and he would listen to Mary's stories quite in the old way, whistling to himself, not thinking about her at all perhaps, really, but very patient. But after the first fortnight he slipped away from her again—and now more than ever before. He went off for long walks with Hamlet, refusing to take her with them; he answered her questions so vaguely that she could see that he paid her no attention at all; he turned upon her and rent her if she complained. And it was all, she was sure, that horrible dog. Jeremy was always with Hamlet now. The free life that the farm gave them, no lessons, no set hours, no care for appearances, left them to choose their own ways and so developed their individualities. Helen was now more and more with her elders, was becoming that invaluable thing "a great help to her mother", and even, to her own inexhaustible pride, paid two calls with Mrs. Cole on the wives of neighboring farmers. Then Barbara absorbed more than ever of Helen's attention, and Mary was not allowed to share in these rites and services because "she always made Barbara cry".

Hamlet began to be an obsession with her. Mary told herself that if it were not for the dog Jeremy would always be with her, would play with her, walk with her, laugh with her as he used to do. She acquired now an awkward habit of gazing at him with passionate intensity. He would raise his eyes and find the great moon-faced spectacles fixed upon him with a beseeching, reproachful glare in the light of them. This would irritate him intensely. He would say:

"You'll know me next time, Mary".

She would blush crimson and then with trembling mouth answer:

"I wasn't looking".

"Yes, you were".

"No, I wasn't".

"Of course, you were—staring as though I were an Indian or Chinaman. If my face is dirty, say so".

"It isn't dirty".

"Well, then—"

"You're always so cross".

"I'm not cross—only you're so silly—"

"You usen't always to say I was silly. Now you always do—every minute".

"So you are". Then as he saw the tears coming, he would get up and go away. He didn't mean to be unkind to her, he was fond of her—but he hated scenes.

"Mary's always howling about something now", he confided to Helen.

"Is she?" Helen answered with indifference. "Mary's such a baby".

After the affair of the sea-picnic Jeremy, having nearly drowned poor Charlotte Le Page on that occasion, was for some time under a cloud. It was felt that he was getting too big for anyone to manage. Being a little in disgrace he went off more than ever by himself, always appearing again at the appointed time, but telling no one where he had been or what he had been doing. Mary longed with feverish longing to share in his adventures. If only he would tell her what he did on these walks of his. But no, only Hamlet knew. Perhaps, if he did not go with the dog he would go with her. When this idea crept into her brain she seized it and clutched it. That was all he wanted, a companion! Were Hamlet not there he would take her. Were Hamlet not there. . . . She began to brood over this. She wondered. . . . She considered. She shuddered at her own wickedness, she tried to drive the thoughts from her head, but they

still came, they came, they came. . . .

After all no one need know. For a day or two Jeremy would be sorry and then he would forget. She knew the man who went round selling dogs . . . selling dogs and buying them. . . .

§ 3

She shuddered at her wickedness.

The last days of August came and with them the last week of the holiday. Already there was a scent of autumn in the air, leaves were turning gold and red, and the evenings came cool and sudden, upon the hot summer afternoons. Mary was not very well; she had caught a cold somewhere and existed in the irritating condition of going out one day and being held indoors the next. This upset her temper and at night she had nightmares in which she saw clouds of smoke crawling in at her window, snakes on the floor, and crimson flames darting at her from the ceiling. It was because she was in an abnormal condition of health that the idea of doing something with Hamlet gained such hold upon her. She considered the matter from every point of view. She did not want to be cruel to the dog; she supposed that after a week or two he would be quite happy with his new master and, in any case, he had strolled in so casually upon the Cole family that he was accustomed to a wandering life.

She did not intend that anyone should know. It was to be a deep secret all of her own.

Jeremy was going to school in September and before then she must make him friendly to her again. She saw stretching in front of her all the lonely autumn without him, and her own memories of the miserable summer to make her wretched. She was

an extremely sentimental little girl. . . .

As always happens when one is meditating with a placated conscience a wicked deed, the opportunity was suddenly offered Mary of achieving her purpose. One morning Jeremy after refusing to listen to one of Mary's long romances lost his temper:

"I can't stop", he said. "You bother and bother and bother. Hamlet and I are going out. And I'm sick of your silly old stories. . . . Look here, Mary, what's been the matter with you lately? You're always crying now for something. And you look at me as though I'd done something dreadful. I haven't done anything".

"I—never—said you—had", Mary gulped out. He rubbed his nose in a way that he had when he was puzzled—

"If it's anything I do, tell me. It's so silly always crying. The holidays will be over soon and you've done nothing but cry".

"You're—never—with me—now", Mary sobbed.

"Well, I've been busy".

"You haven't—you can't be busy all—by yourself".

"Oh, yes, you can". He was getting impatient. "Anyway you might let Hamlet and me alone,—you're always bothering one of us".

"No, I'm not". She choked an enormous sob and burst out with: "It's always Hamlet now. I wish he'd never—come. It was much nicer before".

Then he lost his temper. "Oh, you're a baby. . . I'm sick of you and your scenes", he cried and stamped off.

In Mary's red-rimmed eyes, as she watched him go, determination grew.

It happened that upon the afternoon of that same day Miss Jones announced that she would take Mary

for a walk: then, just as they passed through the farm gates, Hamlet, rushing out, joined them. He did not often humor them with his company, despising women most especially when they walked; but today his master was busy digging for worms in the vegetable garden and, after a quarter of an hour's contemplation of this fascinating occupation, he had wandered off in search of a livelier game. He decided to join Miss Jones; he could do what he pleased, he could amuse himself with her ineffectual attempts to keep him in order and he could irritate Mary—so he danced along, with his tail in the air, barking at imaginary rats and poking his nose into hedges.

Mary, with a sudden tightened clutching of the heart, realized that her hour was upon her. She felt so wicked as she realized this that she wondered that the ground didn't open up and swallow her, as it had done with those unfortunate people in the Bible. But no, the world was calm. Little white milky clouds raced in lines and circles across the sky, and once and again a leaf floated from a tree, hung for a moment suspended and then turned, slowly, to the ground. The hedges were a black-green, high and thick above the dusty road: there had been no rain for weeks. Truly, a stable world—Mary, glaring at fate, wondered how it could be so.

Miss Jones, who was happy and optimistic today, talked in a tenderly reminiscent tone of her youth. This vein of reminiscence Mary, on her normal day, loved. Today she did not hear a word that Miss Jones said:

"I remember so well my mother saying to my dear brother, 'Do what you like, my boy. I trust you.' And I remember his saying, 'Don't ask me

to tell a lie, mother, I cannot do it.'"

"Like George Washington", said Mary, suddenly catching the last words of Miss Jones's sentence.

"He was like many famous characters in history I used to think. Once I remember reading about Oliver Cromwell. . . . Where is that dog? Hamlet! Hamlet! Perhaps he's gone after the sheep. Ah! there he is! Hamlet, you naughty dog!"

They were approaching one of their favorite pieces of country, Mellot Wood. Here, on the wood's edge the ground broke away, running down in a field of corn to a little green valley with clustered trees that showed only their heads, so thickly embedded were they, and beyond the valley the sea. Mary looked about her. It was here on the edge of the Rafiel Road that skirted the wood that she had once seen the dog-man eating his luncheon out of a red pocket handkerchief. There was no sign of him today. All was silent and still; only the little wood uttered sighs of content beneath the flying clouds. Hamlet, tired with his racing after imaginary rabbits, walked quietly by Mary's side. What was she to do? She had once again the desperate feeling that something stronger than she was had swept down upon her, and was forcing her to do this thing. She seemed to have no will of her own but to be watching some other commit an act whose dangerous wickedness froze her heart. How could she? But she must. Someone was doing it for her.

And in very truth it seemed so. Miss Jones said that now they were here she might as well call upon Miss Andrews, the sister of the Mellot farmer. Miss Andrews had promised her some duck's eggs. They pushed open the farm-gate, passed across the yard and knocked on the house door.

Near Mary was a large barn with a heavy door, now ajar. Hamlet sat, gazing pensively at a flock of geese, his tongue out, panting contentedly.

"Wait here one minute, Mary", said Miss Jones. "I won't stay".

Miss Jones disappeared. Mary, still under the strange sense that it was not she, but another, who did these things, moved back to the barn, calling softly to Hamlet. He followed her, sniffing a rat somewhere. Very quickly she pulled back the door; he, still investigating his rat, followed into the dark excitement of the barn. With a quick movement she bent down, slipped off his collar which she hid in her dress, then shut him in. She knew that for a moment or two he would still be pursuing his rat and she saw, with guilty relief, Miss Jones come out to her just as she had finished her evil deed.

"Miss Andrews is out", said Miss Jones. "They are all away at Liskane Fair".

They left the farm and walked down the road. Hamlet had not begun his cry.

Miss Jones was pleased. "Such a nice servant", she said. "She had been with the family fifty years she told me and had nursed Mr. Andrews on her knee. Fancy! Such a large fat man as he is now. Too much beer I suppose—I suppose they get so thirsty with all the straw and hay about. . . . Where's Hamlet?"

Mary, wickedder than ever, stared through her spectacles down the road. "I don't know, Miss Jones", she said. They had left the wood and the farm, and there was nothing to be seen but the long white ribbon of road hemmed in by the high hedges.

"Perhaps he stayed behind at the farm", said Miss Jones.

Then Mary told her worst lie.

"Oh no, Miss Jones. He ran past us just now. Didn't you see him?"

"No, I didn't. He's gone on ahead I suppose. He runs home sometimes. Naughty dog! We shall catch him up".

But of course they did not. They passed through the gates of Cow Farm and still nothing of Hamlet was to be seen.

"Oh dear! Oh dear!" said Miss Jones. "I do hope that he's arrived. Whatever will Jeremy say if anything has gone wrong?"

Mary was breathing hard now as though she had been running a desperate race. She would at this moment have given all that she possessed or all that she was ever likely to possess to recall her deed. If she could have seen Hamlet rushing down the road toward her she would have cried with relief; there seemed now to be suddenly removed from her that outside agency that had forced her to do this thing; now, having compelled her, it had withdrawn and left her to carry the consequences. Strangely confused in her sentimental soul was her terror of Jeremy's wrath and her own picture of the wretched Hamlet barking his heart out, frightened, thirsty, and lonely. Her teeth began to chatter; she clenched her hands together.

Miss Jones went across the courtyard, calling:

"Hamlet! Hamlet!" The family was collected, having just sat down to tea, so that the announcement received its full measure of excitement.

"Has Hamlet come back? We thought he was ahead of us".

A chair had tumbled over; Jeremy had run round the table to Miss Jones.

"What's that? Hamlet? Where is he?"

"We thought he must be ahead of

us. He ran past us down the road and we thought—"

They thought! Silly women! Jeremy, as though he were a challenging God, stood up against Miss Jones hurling questions at her. Where had they been? What road had they taken? Had they gone into the wood? Where had he run past them?

"I don't know", said Miss Jones, to this last. "I didn't see him. Mary did".

Jeremy turned upon Mary: "Where was it you saw him?"

She couldn't speak. Her tongue wouldn't move, her lips wouldn't open; she could but waggle her head like an idiot. She saw nothing but his face. It was a desperate face; she knew so much better than all the others what the thought of losing Hamlet was to him. It was part of the harshness of her fate that she should understand him so much better than the others did.

But she herself had not realized how hardly he would take it. . . .

"I didn't. . . . I couldn't. . . ."

"There's the dog-man", he stammered; "he'll have stolen him". Then he was off out of the room in an instant.

And that was more than Mary could bear. She realized, even as she followed him, that she was giving her whole case away, that she was now, as always, weak when she should be strong, soft when she should be hard, good when she should be wicked, wicked when she should be good. She could not help herself. With trembling limbs and a heart that seemed to be hammering her body into pieces, she followed him out. She found him in the hall, tugging at his coat.

"Where are you going?" she said weakly.

"Going?" he answered fiercely.

"Where do you think?" He glared at her. "Just like you". He broke off, suddenly appealing to her. "Mary, can't you remember? It will be getting dark soon and if we have to wait until tomorrow the dog-man will have got him. At any rate he had his collar—"

Then Mary broke out. She burst into sobs, pushed her hand into her dress, and held out the collar to him.

"There it is! There it is!" she said hysterically.

"You've got it?" He stared at her, suspicion slowly coming to him. "But how—? What have you done?"

She looked up at him wild-eyed, the tears making dirty lines on her face, her hand out toward him. "I took it off . . . I shut Hamlet into the barn at Mellot Farm. I wanted him to be lost. I didn't want you to have him. I hated him—always being with you and me never".

Jeremy moved back and at the sudden look in his eyes her sobbing ceased, she caught her breath, and stared at him with a silly fixed stare as a rabbit quivers before a snake.

Jeremy said in his ordinary voice:

"You shut Hamlet up? You didn't want him to be found".

She nodded her head several times as though now she must convince him quickly of this,—

"Yes, yes, yes, I did. . . . I know I shouldn't but I couldn't help it—"

He clutched her arm, and then shook her with a sudden wave of fierce physical anger that was utterly unlike him and therefore the more terrifying.

"You wicked, wicked. . . . You beast Mary!"

She could only sob, her head hanging down. He let her go.

"What barn was it?"

She described the place. He gave

her another look of contempt and then rushed off, running across the courtyard.

There was still no one in the hall: she could go up to her room without the fear of being disturbed. She found the room, all white and black now with the gathering dusk. Beyond the window the evening breeze was rustling in the dark trees of the garden and the boom of the sea could be heard, faintly. Mary sat, where she always sat when she was unhappy, inside the wardrobe with her head among the clothes. She had a fit of hysterical crying, biting the hanging clothes between her teeth, feeling suddenly sick and tired and exhausted with flaming eyes and a dry-parched throat. Why had she ever done such a thing, she loving Jeremy as she did? Would he ever forgive her? No, never—she saw that in his face—perhaps he would—if he found Hamlet quickly and came back. Perhaps Hamlet never would be found. . . . Then Jeremy's heart would be broken.

She slept from utter exhaustion and was so found by her mother when the room was quite dark and only shadows moved in it.

"Why, Mary?" said Mrs. Cole. "What are you doing here? We couldn't think where you were. And where's Jeremy?"

Jeremy! She started up, remembering everything.

"Hasn't he come back? Oh, he's lost and he'll be killed and it will be all my fault!" She burst into another fit of wild, hysterical crying. Her mother took her arm. "Mary, explain—what have you done?"

Mary explained, her teeth chattering, her head aching so that she could not see.

"And you shut him up like that? Whatever . . . oh, Mary, you wicked

girl! and Jeremy—he's been away two hours now. . . ."

She turned off leaving Mary alone in the black room.

§ 4

Mary was left to every terror that can beset a lonely, hysterical child—terror of Jeremy's fate, terror of Hamlet's loss, terror of her own crimes, above all, terror of the lonely room, the waving elms and the gathering dark. "Ah! you're the little girl", they seemed to say, "who lost Jeremy's dog and broke Jeremy's heart". Ridiculous pictures passed before her, of Jeremy hanging from a tree, Jeremy lying frozen in the wood, the faithful Hamlet dead at his side, Jeremy stung by an adder and succumbing to his horrible tortures, Jeremy surrounded by violent men who snatched Hamlet from him, beat him on the head and left him for dead on the ground.

She passed what seemed to her hours of torture under these horrible imaginings. After endless ages of darkness and terror and misery she heard voices—then *his* voice! She jumped out of the wardrobe and listened. Yes, it *was* his voice. She pushed back the door, crept down the passage and came suddenly upon a little group with Jeremy in its midst crowded together at the top of the stairs. Jeremy was wrapped up in his father's heavy coat, and looked very small and impish as he peered from out of it. He was greatly excited, his eyes shining, his mouth smiling, his cheeks flushed.

His audience consisted of Helen, Mrs. Cole, Miss Jones, and Aunt Amy. He described to them how he had run along the road "for miles and miles and miles", how at last he had found the farm, had rung the bell, had in-

quired, and had finally discovered Hamlet licking up sugary tea in the farm kitchen; there had then been a rapturous meeting and he had boldly declared that he could find his way home again without aid. "They wanted me to be driven home in their trap—but I wasn't going to have that. They'd been at the Fair all day and didn't want to go out again . . . I could see that". So he and Hamlet started gaily on their walk home and then, in some way or another, he took the wrong turn and suddenly they were in Mellot Wood. "It was dark as anything, you know, although there was going to be a moon. We couldn't see a thing and then I got lost and lost. At last we just sat under a tree—there was nothing more to do!" Then apparently Jeremy had slept and had, finally, been found in the proper romantic manner by Jim and his father.

"Well, all's well that ends well", said Aunt Amy with a sniff. In spite of that momentary softness over the defeat of the Dean's Ernest, she liked her young nephew no better than of old. She had desired that he should be punished for this, but as she looked at the melting eyes of Mrs. Cole and Miss Jones, she had very little hope.

Mary was forgotten, no one noticed her.

"Bed!" said Mrs. Cole.

"Really, what a terrible affair", said Miss Jones. "And I can't help feeling that it was my fault".

"What, Mary—" began Mrs. Cole. And then she stopped. She had perhaps some sense that Mary had already received sufficient punishment.

Mary waited, standing against the passage wall. Jeremy, who had not seen her, vanished into his room. She waited, then plucking up all her courage with the desperate, suffocating

sense of a prisoner laying himself beneath the guillotine, she knocked timidly on his door.

He said, "Come in", and, entering, she saw him, in his braces standing on a chair trying to put the picture entitled "Daddy's Christmas" straight upon its nail. The sight of this familiar task—the picture would never hang straight although every day Jeremy who, strangely enough, had an eye to such matters, tried to correct it,—cheered her a little.

"Won't it go straight?" she said feebly.

"No, it won't", he began and then suddenly realizing the whole position stopped.

"I'm sorry, Jeremy", she muttered hanging her head down.

"Oh, that's all right", he answered, turning away from her and pulling at the string. "It was a beastly thing to do all the same", he added.

"Will you forgive me?" she asked.

"Oh, there isn't any forgiveness about it . . . Girls are queer I suppose. I don't understand them myself. There, that's better . . . I say, it was simply beastly under that tree—"

"Was it?"

"Beastly—there was something howling somewhere, a cat or something".

"You do forgive me, don't you?"

"Yes, yes . . . I say is that right now? Oh, it won't *stay* there. It's the wall or something".

He came down from the chair yawning.

"Jim's nice", he confided to her. "He's going to take me ratting one day!"

"I'm going", Mary said again and waited.

Jeremy colored, looked as though he would say something, then in si-

lence presented a very grimy cheek. "Good night", he said with an air of intense relief.

"Good night", she said, kissing him. She closed the door behind her. She knew that the worst had happened. He had passed away, utterly

beyond her company, her world, her interests. She crept along to her room and there, with a determination and a strength rare in a child so young and so undisciplined, faced her loneliness.

(To be continued)

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JULIA DE TRECCEUR.

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Translated from the French by FREDERICK T. JONES.

I.

EVERYONE who, like ourselves, had known Raoul de Trécœur in his early youth had believed that he was destined for a great future. He had been endowed with most remarkable gifts. There remain of him two or three sketches and some *centaines* of poetry, which gave promise of a master ; but he was extremely rich, and had been very badly brought up ; so he speedily degenerated into mere dilettantism. A perfect stranger, like most men of his generation, to the idea of duty, he allowed himself to be swayed in everything by his instincts, which, happily for the rest of the world, were vivacious rather than mischievous. Consequently, when he died in the flood-tide of youth, he was the subject of general commiseration for having liked, not wisely but too well, whatsoever he found agreeable. "The poor boy," they said, "was only his own enemy ;" which, however, was not the exact truth.

At five-and-twenty, Trécœur had married his cousin Clotilde-Andrée de Pers, a good and gracious person, whose only world was that of fashion. Madame Trécœur had lived with her husband in a region of unwholesome tempests, where she felt like a stranger, and, in a sense, degraded. He tormented her almost as much by his fits of remorse as by his misdeeds. He looked upon her, with justice, as an angel, and, whenever he had been unfaithful to her, he had wept at her feet, lamenting that he was unworthy of her, that he was the victim of his temperament, and that he had been born in an age of unbelief. One day he threatened, if she would not forgive him, to kill himself in her boudoir ; naturally, she forgave him. All this dramatic business wearied her in her life of resignation. She would have preferred to be miserable in a quieter fashion, and with less eloquence.

All her husband's friends had been in love with her, founding their hopes on his faithlessness. But unfaithful husbands do not always make unfaithful wives. Often, indeed, it is the contrary, this poor world being little amenable to the rules of logic. In brief, after her

husband's death, Madame de Trécœur was left stranded, worn out and broken, but without encumbrance.

From this unhappy union was born a daughter, named Julia, whom, in spite of all Clotilde's remonstrances, her father had completely spoiled. M. de Trécœur's idolatry for his child had been notorious, and the world, with its customary leniency of judgment, willingly pardoned his scandalous life in consideration of this one merit, which, indeed, was not always one. To love one's children is not, in truth, very difficult; not to be a monster is enough. Love for them is not in itself a virtue. It is a passion which, like the rest, is good or evil according as it is our master or our servant. One can even believe that no other passion is more productive of good or of evil.

Julia had been splendidly endowed, but, thanks to the paternal education, her ardent and precocious nature had grown at random, as though in the midst of a virgin forest. She was short, dark, pale, supple, slender, with big blue eyes, full of fire, with matted black hair, and superbly arched eyebrows. Her habitual manner was reserved and haughty; but when *en famille* she put off her dignified air, and tumbled about on the floor. She played at games of her own invention. She turned her historical lessons into little plays, into which she introduced speeches to the people, with dialogues and music, and especially with chariot races. On these occasions, in spite of her serious air, she was very comical, and cruelly burlesqued the people who did not please her.

For her father she displayed a passionate fondness, curiously counteracted by the feeling of moving pity with which her mother's sorrows inspired her young heart. Her, she often saw in tears, and then she would throw herself at her feet, all in a heap, and there remain for hours, motionless and silent, looking at her with humid eyes, and drinking in from time to time a tear upon her cheek. She never asked her why she wept. Like most children, she had seemingly caught some echoes of the household griefs. Without the least doubt her quick intelligence had taken count of the sins of her father; but her father, that *beau cavalier*, clever, generous, fond, she adored him; she was proud to be his daughter; she trembled with joy when he held her to his heart. She could neither judge nor censure him. He was a superior being. She contented herself with pitying and doing her best to console that sweet and charming creature who was her mother, and who was in sorrow.

In Madame de Trécœur's circle of relations, Julia was looked upon simply as a little nuisance. These "dear madames," as she called them, who graced her mother's "Thursdays," told one another, with bitterness, of the scenes of ridiculous mimicry with which the child followed their entrances and their exits. The men thought themselves lucky when they did not carry away some nicknack or other down their backs. All this delighted M. de Trécœur. When his daughter, with half-a-dozen chariots, went through with one of those Olympic races which put out of tune all the pianos in the neighborhood:

"Julia," he cried, "you don't make enough noise. Smash one of the vases."

And then she smashed a vase; whereupon her father kissed her enthusiastically.

This style of education, however, assumed a graver character as the child grew and became a young girl. Her father's tenderness assumed a sort of gallantry. He took her out with him to the Bois, to the races, to see the sights. She had not a wish which he did not divine and gratify. At thirteen she had her horses, her groom, and a carriage, with her monogram on it. When taken ill, and feeling that his sickness was, perhaps, mortal, the unhappy man overwhelmed his beloved child with pledges of his dying love. In this way he satisfied all her desires by a precocious satiety, as though he had wanted to leave her nothing but a wish for the forbidden fruit.

Julia mourned for him with frantic transports of grief, and cherished his memory with a passionate worship. She had a special room, which she filled with his portraits, and with a thousand secret mementos, which she kept surrounded with flowers.

Madame de Tréceur, like most cousins who marry a cousin, had been married very young. She remained a widow until she was eight-and-twenty; when her mother, the Baroness de Pers, who was still living, and one of the liveliest of her sex, discreetly suggested to her the propriety of a second marriage. After having exhausted the practical and extremely sensible reasons which seemed to counsel her to take this step, the baroness came to the sentimental ones:

"In good faith, my poor child," she said, "you have not, so far, had your fair share of this world's happiness. I don't wish to speak of your husband's wickedness, because he is dead; but, between ourselves, he was a dreadful creature. *Mon Dieu!* delightful at times, I grant—I have been captivated myself—like all wicked creatures! . . . but otherwise, monstrous, . . . monstrous! Well, certainly, I do not say that marriage will ever be a state of perfect happiness; nevertheless, it is that which, so far, has been found the best in which to enjoy life respectably among well-bred people. You are in the flower of your youth; you are very pleasant to look at—very pleasant! And, by way of parenthesis, you will lose nothing when you are puffed out a little higher in the back with a becoming bustle; for you do not even know any longer what is being worn, my poor little puss. But, stop; these things are abominations. What—I cannot help asking—what is your aim for the future? In short, I want to tell you that you still have everything needful, and even more than everything needful, to attract a husband—if there should be any attractions for him, which I like to believe. It would, indeed, be necessary to despair absolutely of Providence if it did not hold in reserve some compensations for us after all our trials. It is already a manifest sign of its bounty that you have recovered your *embon-point*, my poor *mignonne!* Kiss your mother. Come, when are we going to marry off this handsome young woman?"

There was no maternal exaggeration in the compliments which the baroness addressed to Clotilde. All Paris regarded her with the same eyes as her mother. She had always been infinitely attractive, but never had she been so attractive as now. Though dressed in subdued mourning, her personality had the richness of some beautiful fruit, ripe and fresh. The shy tenderness of her dark eyes, her fair forehead framed in luxuriant masses of silky hair, her shoulders of pink marble, her special charm as a young matron, beautiful, loving, and chaste—all these, added to an unblemished reputation and an income of sixty thousand francs, could not fail to attract matrimonial aspirants. They brought forth, indeed, a legion of them. Propriety, public opinion even, which had judged between her husband and herself, urged her to a second marriage. Her own feelings, though naturally refined, created no obstacle, for her conscience was void of offence. She had been faithful to her husband; she had shed bitter tears to the memory of the unhappy partner of her youth; but he had wearied and worn out her love; and, though she did not join in the posthumous recriminations of her mother against M. de Tré-cœur, she felt that she owed to him no other duty than to pray for him.

She had been a widow, however, for many months; but to the entreaties of the baroness she continued to make a resistance for which that lady in vain sought out a cause. One day she fancied she had discovered it.

"Confess the truth," said she; "you are afraid of provoking Julia. Ah! as for that, my child—that would be mere folly. You need have no serious scruple on that account. Julia will be very wealthy in her own right, and will have no need of your fortune. She herself will marry in three or four years (I wish much happiness to her husband—parenthetically!), and just think a minute in what a pretty fix you will then find yourself. But, *mon Dieu*, is there never going to be an end of this sort of thing? After the father, look, even now, at the daughter. Why, she makes chapels with her father's portraits and spurs, to her heart's content; that is *her* affair; most certainly it is not I who give her permission. But she might, at least, let us live! Is it possible that you cannot dispose of yourself without asking her permission? In that case, if you are her slave, my darling, turn me out-of-doors! You know of nothing that you could do which would be more agreeable to her, for she doesn't appreciate me, your daughter! . . . But, in good sooth, what could she do if you were to marry again? A father-in-law is not a mother-in-law; quite otherwise. Eh! *mon Dieu*, a father-in-law would delight her—men of all kinds will delight her; I prophesy that of her. She needn't worry about that. Confess, now, is not this what stands in your way?"

"No, my mother; I assure you," said Clotilde.

"Yes, my daughter; I assure you. Well, then, do you wish me to speak to Julia, and try to make her listen to reason? I would rather give her a whipping, but as it is——"

"My poor, dear mother," replied Clotilde, "must I tell you everything?" And she threw herself on her knees before the baroness.

"Certainly, my child; tell me everything. But don't make me cry, I implore you! Is it very sad, what you are going to tell me?"

"Not very pleasant."

"Heavens! But go on."

"In the first place, mother, I confess that I have no personal objection to marry again——"

"I can well believe it. But, in that case, nothing else is wanting."

"As for Julia, whom I dote on, who loves me dearly, and who loves you, also, dearly, notwithstanding what you say——"

"To the contrary," said the baroness. "But it doesn't matter; go on."

"As for Julia, I have more confidence than you in her good sense and her good heart. In spite of the enthusiastic affection which she preserves for her father, I am sure that she would understand, that she would respect, my purpose, and would love me none the less, especially if her father-in-law were not personally disagreeable to her; for you know the violence of her likes and dislikes."

"Know it!" said the baroness, bitterly. "Well, I suppose we shall have to submit a list of the gentlemen to the dear little pet, so that she can choose for you."

"That would be useless, my good mother," said Clotilde. "The choice is already made by the person most interested, and I am sure it will not be objectionable to Julia."

"Well, *ma mignonne*, then there is an end of the matter."

"Alas! no. I am going to tell you something which covers me with shame . . . Among all the men whom we know, the only one that—the only one who pleases me, in short, is the only one who is not in love with me."

"He is a savage, then! he can be nothing else than a savage! But who is it?"

"I have told you, my poor mother; the only one of our friends who is not in love with me."

"Bah! who is that?—your cousin, Pierre?"

"No—but you are very close to it."

"M. de Lucan!" cried the baroness. "That is how it ought to be! he is the pick of the lot! *Mon Dieu!* my darling, what identical tastes we have! He is charming, your Lucan; he is charming! Kiss me . . . Seek no farther; seek no farther; here, positively, is what we want!"

"But, mother, since he does not wish me——"

"Well, he does not wish you—at present. What a fuss! How do you know? Have you asked him? My dear, the idea is impossible; you were made for each other from all eternity. He is charming, distinguished, well-bred, wealthy, intellectual—everything, in short—everything!"

"Except being in love, mother."

The baroness again exclaimed against so great an improbability, when Clotilde laid before her a series of facts and details which no longer left room for illusions. Her mother, dismayed, felt obliged to resign herself to the miserable conviction, that there existed in the world a man of such bad taste as not to be in love with her daughter, and that that man, unhappily, was M. de Lucan.

She reached her house thinking over this unheard-of mystery, the solution of which, however, she had not long to wait for.

II.

GEORGE-RENÉ DE LUCAN was closely bound by ties of friendship to the Count Pierre de Moras, a cousin of Clotilde's. They had been comrades in childhood, in youth, in travel, and even in arms; for chance having taken them to the United States at the outbreak of the civil war, they had found the opportunity a favorable one for receiving the baptism of fire. Their friendship had been still more firmly welded by the hazards of war, which, far from their country, they encountered like brothers. Their friendship, moreover, had for many years been marked by a rare spirit of mutual confidence, delicacy, and strength; they held each other in the highest respect, and with justice. Otherwise there was little in common between them. Pierre de Moras was of an imposing stature, as fair as a Scandinavian, handsome, and as strong as a lion—a good-natured one. Lucan was dark, slight, elegant, and sedate. In his glance, proud and a trifle melancholy; in his accent, cold yet soft; in his walk, even, there was a mingled graciousness and authority which at once impressed and charmed.

From a moral standpoint they were not less dissimilar. The one, a *bon vivant*, a thorough-going and contented sceptic, and the devil-may-care "protector" of a ballet-girl; the other, forever a prey to unrest, in spite of his outward calm, romantic, ardent, tormented with love and with religion. On their return from America, Pierre de Moras had introduced Lucan at the house of his cousin Clotilde, and from that moment there had been at least two points on which they had been in perfect accord: a profound respect for Clotilde, and a profound dislike for her husband. They passed judgment, each in his own way, on the character and conduct of M. de Trécœur. In Count Pierre's eyes, Trécœur was merely a mischievous creature; in those of M. de Lucan, he was a criminal.

"Why a criminal?" said Pierre. "Is it his fault that he was born with all the flames of hell in his marrow? I admit that, whenever I see Clotilde's red eyes, I should like to break his head; but I should feel no more anger in doing it than if I were crushing a serpent. It's the man's nature."

"You fill me with horror," replied Lucan. "That degrading idea simply extinguishes virtue, free-will, liberty—the moral universe, in short. If we are not, at least in a great degree, the masters of our

passions ; if it is our passions which fatally master us ; if a man is, by necessity, good or evil, honest or knavish, treacherous or loyal, according to his instincts, tell me, then, just this, I beg : why do you honor me with your esteem and friendship ? I am no more entitled to these than the first-comer—than Tréceur, himself."

"Pardon, my friend," said Pierre, gravely ; "in the world of plants, I prefer a rose to a thistle ; in the moral world, I prefer you to Tréceur. You were born a man of honor ; I rejoice at it, and I profit by it."

"But, my dear Pierre, you are quite mistaken," replied Lucan. "I was, on the contrary, born with detestable instincts, with the germs of all the vices."

"Like Socrates."

"Just so ; like Socrates. And if my father had not whipped me in due season, if my mother had not been a saint, and if, finally, I had not, myself, subjected my will most energetically to the dictates of my conscience, I should now be a scoundrel, with neither faith nor morals."

"But there is no guarantee that you may not become a scoundrel some day, my dear fellow. There is no one living who may not become a scoundrel when his time comes. All depends on the strength of the temptation. You, yourself—be your instincts of honor and dignity what they may—are you quite sure that you will never meet with a temptation which will overcome them ? Could you not, for example, conceive such a thing as that you might love a woman well enough to commit a crime ?"

"No," said Lucan ; "and you ?"

"Me . . . me ! oh, there is no merit in my case. I have no passions. I am heart-broken about it, but I haven't. I was a pattern when I was born. You recollect my childhood ; I was a diminutive model. Now I am a big model ; that's all the difference ; and that doesn't cost a fortune. Shall we go and see Clotilde ?"

"Yes, let us go."

They went to Clotilde's, herself well worthy of the friendship of these true gentlemen. They were received with marked consideration, even by Mademoiselle Julia, who seemed subdued to a certain degree by the influence of these noble natures. In the speech and bearing of both, moreover, there was an elegant correctness which seemed to satisfy the refined taste of the child, as well as her artistic instincts. During the early days of her mourning, Julia's temper had become somewhat *farouche*. When her mother received visits, she abruptly left the drawing-room and went and shut herself in her own chamber, taking care at the same time to display to the unlucky visitors her sovereign displeasure. Cousin Pierre and his friend were alone privileged with a polite reception ; when she knew they were present she would even condescend to come from her room to go and receive them, along with her mother.

Clotilde, then, had good reason to suppose that her inclination for

M. de Lucan was approved of by her daughter ; unhappily, she had even better reason to doubt whether M. de Lucan's feelings responded to her own. Not only, indeed, had he preserved toward her an attitude of the most restrained friendship, but since she had been a widow, this restraint had perceptibly increased. His visits became fewer and fewer ; he seemed even to avoid with especial care occasions when he should find himself alone with her, as though he had divined her secret feelings, and sought to discourage them. Such were the sadly significant symptoms which Clotilde had confided to her mother.

On the same day when the baroness, in the Rue Trouchet, had received this painful disclosure, a conversation on the same subject took place, in the Rue d'Aumale, between the Count de Moras and George de Lucan. They had that morning taken a walk in the Bois, and Lucan had shown himself more silent than usual. When they were about to separate :

"By the way, Pierre," said he, "I am bored. I am going to travel."

"To travel ? where ?"

"I am going to Sweden. I have always had a desire to see Sweden."

"How strange ! Shall you be gone long ?"

"For two or three months."

"When do you leave ?"

"To-morrow."

"Alone ?"

"Entirely. I shall see you again this evening at the club, shall I not ?"

The strange reserve of this dialogue left in M. de Moras' mind an impression of amazement and uneasiness. Unable to bear it longer, he went two hours later to Lucan's house. On entering, he saw preparations for departure. Lucan was in his study, writing.

"Well, my dear fellow," said the count, "if I am inquisitive, you can tell me so, frankly, but this sudden journey is unprecedented. Seriously, what does it mean ? Are you going to fight a duel beyond the frontier ?"

"Bah ! I should take you, you know well."

"A woman, then ?"

"Yes," said Lucan, drily.

"Forgive my importunity, and good-bye."

"Have I wounded you, my friend ?" said Lucan, detaining him.

"Yes," said the count. "I have no desire, certainly, to penetrate your secrets, but I am quite at a loss to understand the tone of constraint, almost hostility, in which you answer my questions about your journey. Besides, it is not the first symptom of a similar kind which has grieved me. For several months you have been plainly ill-at-ease with me ; it almost seems as if I annoyed you, as if our friendship oppressed you ; and I have the cruel notion that this journey is only a way of putting an end to it."

"Great heaven!" murmured Lucan. "Well, then," he continued, with some agitation in his voice, "I must tell you the truth. I was in hopes that you would have divined it, it is so simple. Your cousin will soon have been a widow for two years. That, I believe, is the term consecrated by custom. I know your feelings toward her; you can now marry her, and you will be supremely right. Nothing seems to me more proper, more natural, more worthy of her and of you. I protest that my friendship for you will remain faithful and whole; but I ask of you to approve of my absenting myself for a little while. That is all."

M. de Moras seemed to have infinite difficulty in grasping the meaning of this speech. After his friend had ceased speaking, he remained for several moments in an attitude of astonishment, and with a fixed stare, as though he were seeking the solution of some enigma; then, suddenly jumping up, and seizing Lucan by both hands:

"Ah, but this is noble!" said he, with heartfelt earnestness.

Then, after another cordial clasp, he added, gaily:

"But if you think of remaining in Sweden until I have married Clotilde, you can build there, and even settle there, for I swear to you that you will stay there for a long time."

"Can it be possible that you do not love her?" said Lucan, with bated breath.

"On the contrary, I love her greatly; I appreciate her, I admire her; but for me she is a sister; merely a sister. The delightful part of this, my dear fellow, is that my dream has always been to marry you—Clotilde and you; but you always seemed to me so cold, so little impressed, so refractory, and, lately, above all— *Mon Dieu!* George, how pale you are!"

The final outcome of this conversation was that M. de Lucan, instead of departing for Sweden, went, a few minutes later, to the house of the Baroness de Pers, to whom he disclosed his wishes, and who, while listening to him, believed herself the sport of some enchanting dream.

Beneath her giddy exterior, however, she had too lively a sense of her own and her daughter's dignity to permit the joy which oppressed her to find vent in M. de Lucan's presence. Whatever desire she may have felt to take to her heart, then and there, this ideal son-in-law, she postponed this satisfaction, and contented herself with expressing to him her own good wishes. Sympathizing, also, with his natural impatience, she counselled him to present himself the same evening at the house of Madame de Trécoeur, whose own feelings she was ignorant of, but who, at the very least, would receive his proposal with the esteem and consideration due to a man of his merit. As soon as she was alone, the baroness unbosomed herself in a monologue, mingled with tears; she also provided herself with a delightful little maternal treat by resolving to say nothing to Clotilde, thus leaving to her the full flavor of this surprise.

A woman's heart is an infinitely more delicate organ than that of a man. The constant exercise which she gives it develops in it faculties of a sensitiveness and subtilty to which the mere intellect never attains. This it is which explains her presentiments, more common and more trustworthy than those of men. It seems as if her perceptions, always on the stretch and vibrating, were thrilled by mysterious currents, and were able to divine before they can understand.

When M. de Lucan was announced, Clotilde felt as if one of these obscure electric shocks went through her, and, in spite of all the counter-objections which possessed her soul, she knew that she was beloved—that he had come to tell her so. She seated herself in a large arm-chair, arranging her silk skirt with both hands, with the motion of a bird flapping its wings.

The manifest agitation of Lucan set the seal to her premonition and to her delight. With such men, endowed with passions strong but sternly repressed, accustomed to self-mastery, brave and calm, perturbation of soul is either terrifying or it is charming.

After telling her—which was needless—that his present visit was not an ordinary one :

“Madame,” he added, “I am aware that the request which I am about to make requires a well-considered reply. May I ask you, then, not to make that reply to-day, the more so because it will, indeed, be too painful to hear it from your lips, if it be not favorable.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” said Clotilde, under her breath.

“Your mother, madame, whom I have had the honor of calling on to-day, has been good enough to encourage me—in a certain measure—to hope that you may hold me in some esteem—that, at any rate, you have no prejudice against me. As for myself, madame, I ——— *Mon Dieu!* I love you, in a word, and I can imagine no greater happiness in the world than that which you would confer upon me. You have long known me. There is no need to tell you anything of myself. . . . And now, I will await your pleasure.”

She detained him by a sign, and tried to speak, but her eyes were blinded with tears. She buried her face in her hands, and murmured :

“Pardon! I have had so little happiness! . . . I do not know what it is.”

Lucan fell gently on his knees before her, and, as their eyes met, their hearts filled.

“Speak, my dear friend,” she said. “Tell me again that you love me. I am still so far from realizing it! And why?—and since when?”

He explained to her his misapprehension, his wretched struggle between his love for her and his friendship for Pierre.

“Poor Pierre!” said Clotilde. “What a good fellow! . . . But you are not joking!”

Then he made her smile by describing the deadly fear and misgiving which had seized him at the moment when he had asked her

to decide his fate ; at that instant she had seemed to him a being more charming and saint-like than ever ; so far above him that his pretensions to be loved by her, to become her husband, appeared all at once to be a sort of sacrilegious madness.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" said she, "what idea, then, did you have of me? It is dreadful! I, on the other hand, believed that I was too simple-minded, too commonplace, for you. I said to myself that you must delight in romantic passions, in exciting intrigues ; you have something of that appearance, and that reputation, even ; and I am a woman so little like that!"

At this gentle hint, he told her a few things about his past life, restless but commonplace, which had left only disenchantment and disgust. Before he had met her, the idea of marriage had never entered his mind. In love, indeed, as in friendship, he had always been possessed with the imagination of a certain ideal, a trifle romantic, in fact, and he had feared that he should never find it in marriage. He might have sought it elsewhere—in exciting intrigues, as she had said ; but he loved the order and dignity of life, and had the misfortune to be unable to exist at war with his conscience. Such had been his unsettled youth.

"You ask me," he continued, speaking now unrestrainedly, "why I love you. I love you because you alone have put in unison in my heart two emotions which have always contended with cruel laceration—passion and virtue. Before knowing you I never yielded to one of these without being made horribly miserable by the other. To me they have always seemed irreconcilable, I have never yielded to passion without remorse, or resisted it without regret. Strong or weak, I have always been unhappy and tormented. You, alone, have made me understand that it is possible for a man to love with all the ardor, and, at the same time, with all the dignity of his soul ; I have chosen you because you are loving, and because you are true ; because you are beautiful, and because you are pure ; because you are duty and delight, love and respect, intoxication and peace. This is why I love you! Such a woman, such an angel, are you to me, Clotilde!"

She listened, bending toward him, drinking in his words, and showing in her eyes a sort of divine amazement.

But it seems—who has not had proof of it?—as if human joy cannot reach certain heights without calling down the thunder. In the midst of her ecstasy, Clotilde suddenly shuddered and sprang to her feet. She had heard a smothered cry, followed by the dull sound of a fall. She ran, opened the door, and saw, just inside the adjoining room, Julia stretched on the floor.

Her thought was that the child, just as she was coming in, had caught some of their words, and that the idea of seeing the place of her father occupied by another, taking her unawares, had stirred to the depths this impassioned young creature. Clotilde went with her to her room, whither they carried her, and indicated her wish to be

alone with her child. While lavishing upon her all sorts of endearments, caresses, kisses, Clotilde watched in terrible anguish for the first look from her daughter. That look fastened itself upon her at first wildly, then with a sort of sullen stupor; then the child gently pushed her away; then she came to herself, and, judging her feelings from the expression of her eyes, her mother could read the evidence of a violent conflict of contending emotions.

"I beg of thee—I supplicate thee, my darling child," murmured Clotilde, whose tears fell drop by drop upon the girl's pale, beautiful face.

Suddenly Julia seized her round the neck, drew her toward her, and kissing her wildly, cried out:

"You have done me a great wrong; oh! a great wrong! greater than you can conceive. . . . But I love you dearly . . . I love you dearly! I want to love you . . . I want to! I want to, always . . . I do assure you!"

She burst out sobbing, and both wept for a long while, tightly clasped in each other's arms.

M. de Lucan, however, had deemed it proper to go and seek the Baroness de Pers, so that he might keep her company in the drawing-room. When she learned what had happened, she showed more agitation than surprise.

"*Mon Dieu*, I expected it, my dear sir! I did not warn you, because the subject did not come up . . . but I expected it, most certainly! . . . That child will be the death of my daughter. She will finish what her father so well began . . . for it will be a pure miracle if my daughter, after all she has suffered, is ever again the same as you have known her! I will leave them together . . . I will not go to them . . . Oh, heavens! I will not go to them . . . The very first thing, I should be afraid to oppose my daughter . . . and then I should be out of character, most certainly."

"By the way, how old is Mademoiselle Julia?" asked Lucan, who, in these painful circumstances, preserved his quiet courtesy.

"She will soon be fifteen; and that is not to be regretted, by the way, because, between ourselves, one may hope that she may console herself in a befitting way in a year or two. . . . Oh! she will have no trouble in getting married; not the least trouble; be sure of that. In the first place, she is wealthy; and then, why, she is a pretty vixen. . . . one can't deny that; and there are plenty of men who like that sort of thing!"

Clotilde joined them at last. Whatever may have been her inward feelings, she seemed calm, and with nothing of the actress in her manner. She replied, simply, in a low, sweet voice, to the fevered questionings of her mother. She was still convinced that this misfortune would not have happened had she been able, with some precautions, to communicate to Julia the event which chance had so rudely revealed to her. Then, smiling sadly at M. de Lucan, she said:

"These family troubles, monsieur, cannot have entered into your calculations ; and I suppose it will be only quite natural that your intentions should be modified by them."

A look eloquent of anxiety was depicted on M. de Lucan's features.

"If you demand of me to give you back your freedom," said he, "I can only obey ; if it is only your delicacy which has spoken, I swear to you that you are still more dear to me since I have seen you suffer on my account—and suffer so nobly."

She held out her hand, and he took it, and bowed.

"I shall love your daughter so much," said he, "that she will pardon me."

"Yes, I hope so," said Clotilde. "But she wants to go into a convent for a few months, and I have consented."

Her voice trembled, and her eyes moistened.

"Pardon, monsieur," she continued ; "I have not yet the right to give you so large a share of my griefs. May I, then, beg of you to leave me with my mother ?"

Lucan murmured some words of respect, and retired. It was perfectly true, as he had said, that Clotilde was dearer to him than ever. Nothing had inspired him with so exalted an idea of her moral worth as her bearing during this sad episode. Struck down in the very height of her happiness, she had fallen without a cry, without a plaint, hiding her wound. She had shown, before him, that exquisite shame of suffering which is so rare in her sex. This gave him all the more satisfaction, inasmuch as he had a profound dislike of those painful and violent demonstrations, to give way to which most women never fail to eagerly seize the opportunity—when they have the goodness not to make it.

III.

M. DE LUCAN had been the husband of Clotilde for several months, when the report was spread abroad that Mademoiselle de Trécœur, that erstwhile imp of Satan, was about to take the veil in the convent of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she had retired a short time before her mother's marriage. The report was well founded. Julia had at first submitted with reluctance to the discipline and the observances to which the simple-minded members of the community subjected themselves. Then, little by little, a pious zeal had taken possession of her, the excess of which they had been obliged to moderate. She had begged her mother to place no obstacle in the way of the irresistible call which she had for a religious life, but Clotilde had prevailed on her to postpone her resolution until the completion of her sixteenth year.

Since her marriage Madame de Lucan's relations with her daughter had been of a singular character. She went to see her almost every day, and was always received with the most lively demonstrations of affection ; but on two points—and those the most sensitive—Julia re-

mained inflexible : she would consent neither to go again beneath her mother's roof, nor to see her mother's husband. For a long time, indeed, she had made not the slightest allusion to her mother's new position, which she affected to ignore. One day, however, feeling the irksomeness of such restraint to be intolerable, she summoned up her resolution, and fixing her glistening eyes on her mother :

"Well," she said, "are you, at least, happy?"

"Why do you ask," said Clotilde, "since you hate what I love?"

"I hate no one," replied Julia, briefly. "How is he—your husband?"

From that moment she inquired regularly after M. de Lucan in a tone of polite indifference ; but she never uttered, without hesitation and without manifest uneasiness, the name of the man who occupied her father's place.

But she was now sixteen. Her promise to her mother had been precise. She was free to follow her vocation, and she prepared for it with an impatient ardor which edified the community. One morning Madame de Lucan spoke to her mother and her husband of the anguish which oppressed her heart during these last days of respite.

"As for me, my daughter," said the baroness, "I confess that I supplicate with all my prayers for the arrival of the day which you dread. The life which you have led since your marriage resembles nothing human ; but what brings you the greatest torment is this conflict which you maintain with this child's obstinacy. Well, when she is a nun, there will be no more conflict ; that will be easier for the heart. And remember that you will not in reality be more separated from her than you are now, for the convent is not a cloister—for my part, I should be just as well satisfied if it were ; but, as a matter of fact, it isn't. Why, then, do you object to a vocation which, to me, seems truly providential? Even in the child's own interest you ought to congratulate her on the resolution which she has taken. I appeal to your husband. I should just like to ask you, my dear sir, what would happen to a girl of her disposition if she were once let loose upon the world? Why, she would make havoc! You know what a brain she has—a volcano! And, note well, my dear, that she is already a veritable odalisque. It is a long time since you have seen her ; you have no idea how she has developed. I, who feast myself on her twice a week—I assure you that she is a genuine odalisque ; and with the bearing of a goddess, at that. She is so well formed, too. She lacks nothing. You might throw a curtain over her with a pitchfork, and she would look as if she had just stepped out of Worth's— Stay, let us ask Pierre what he thinks of her ; he is honored with her good graces!"

M. de Moras, who had just come in, shared, indeed, with a very small number of family friends, in the privilege of sometimes accompanying Clotilde to Julia's convent.

"Well, my worthy Pierre," continued the baroness, "we were talking of Julia, and I was telling my daughter and my son-in-law that

it was really very fortunate for him that she insisted on becoming a saint, seeing that otherwise she would set all Paris on fire."

"Because?" asked the count.

"Because she is as beautiful as sin!"

"She is very good-looking, no doubt," said the count, coldly enough.

The baroness having to make some calls with Clotilde, M. de Moras remained alone with Lucan.

"It certainly seems to me," said he, "that poor Julia is having a hard time of it."

"How?"

"Her grandmother speaks of her as though she were a wicked creature! And what do they reproach her with, after all? Her devotion for her father's memory! It is excessive—granted! but filial piety, even when exaggerated, is not a vice, so far as I know. Her emotions are overwrought; but what matter, so long as they are generous? Is that a reason for devoting her to the infernal gods, and throwing her into a dungeon?"

"You are a strange man, my dear fellow, I assure you," said Lucan. "What has got into you?—what would you have? You know perfectly well that Julia entered into religion of her own free will, that her mother is distracted about it, and has spared nothing to alter her determination. As for me, I have no reason to love her: she has caused, and she still causes me much unhappiness; but you are well aware that I was ready to receive her as my daughter if she would only have condescended to return to us."

"Oh, I accuse neither her mother nor yourself; understand that: it is the baroness who irritates me; she is absurd, she is unnatural! After all, Julia is her granddaughter; and yet she gloats—she positively gloats over the idea of seeing her a nun!"

"Well, really, I declare to you that I am quite ready to gloat, also. The situation is an extremely painful one for Clotilde; it has to be ended somehow, and I see no other ending possible."

"Pardon me, but there is another."

"What?"

"You could get her married."

"Good! that is likely enough. To whom?"

The count approached Lucan, looked him in the face, and, smiling awkwardly, said:

"To me."

"Repeat!" said Lucan.

"My dear fellow," replied the count, "you see that my cheeks are red; spare me. I have long wished to approach you with this delicate subject, but courage failed me. Now that I have at last found it, do not take it away."

"My dear friend," said Lucan, "let me recover myself first, for I am amazed. What! you mean to tell me that you are in love with Julia?"

"Desperately, my dear fellow."

"No ! there is something underneath ; you have hit upon this method of bringing us together again ; you would sacrifice yourself for the sake of the peace of the family."

"I swear to you that I am not thinking in the least of the family peace ; I am thinking of my own, which is troubled enough, for I love this child with a violence of feeling which I do not understand. If I do not marry her, I shall be wretched for life."

"Well, then ?" said Lucan, aghast.

"My dear fellow, it is terrible," replied M. de Moras ; "I am completely enslaved. When she looks at me, when I touch her hand, when her dress brushes against me, I feel as though some love philtre were coursing through my veins. I have heard of such throes, but never before have I experienced them. I confess to you that they enrapture me ; at the same time they drive me to despair, for I cannot conceal from myself that there are a thousand chances that this passion will be an unhappy one, and it seems to me truly that I shall bear the burden of it as long as my heart shall beat."

"What a strange business !" said Lucan, who had recovered all his gravity. "It is very serious, this ; very disheartening."

He made some steps across the room, absorbed in reflections, which seemed gloomy enough.

"Does Julia know of your feelings ?" he asked, all of a sudden.

"Most certainly not. I would not allow myself to make her acquainted with them without letting you know. Will you do me the friendship to be my ambassador to her mother ?"

"Why—yes—most willingly," said Lucan, with a shade of hesitation which did not escape his friend.

"You think it is useless, do you not ?" said the count, with a constrained smile.

"Useless ?—why ?"

"In the first place, it is very late."

"It is a little late, no doubt ; Julia is strongly pledged. But I have always been a little mistrustful about this vocation of hers. Besides, in the case of these tempestuous natures, the strongest resolutions of yesterday easily become the disgusts of to-morrow."

"But you are doubtful whether—whether I please her ?"

"Why should you not please her ? You are more than handsome in person. You are two-and-thirty ; she is sixteen. You are a trifle more wealthy than she is. All that is most favorable."

"Then, why do you hesitate to help me ?"

"I do not hesitate to help you ; only, I see that you are very much in love, and, as that is a new experience with you, I am afraid that so novel a condition may impel you into so grave a resolution as marriage a little hastily. A wife is not a mistress. In short, before you take an irrevocable step, I would beg of you to reflect well yet awhile."

"My dear fellow," said the count, "I do not wish to, and I believe

most sincerely that I cannot. You understand my ideas. Real passions will have the last word, and I am not by any means certain that even honor itself would prove a very solid argument against them. As to opposing them with reason, that is a joke! Besides, my dear Lucan, what is there so unreasonable in the fact of marrying a person whom I love? I don't see that it is absolutely necessary not to be in love with one's wife. . . . Well, may I count on you?"

"Without fail," said Lucan, taking his hand. "I have made my objections; now I am completely at your service. I will speak to Clotilde in a moment. She is going to see her daughter this afternoon. Come and dine with us this evening; but summon all your firmness, for, indeed, success is very problematical."

It was not difficult for M. de Lucan to gain M. de Moras' suit with Clotilde. After having listened to him, not without interrupting him more than once with exclamations of surprise:

"*Mon Dieu!*" replied she, "that will be ideal. This marriage would not only put an end to the purpose which distresses me so much, but it would embrace all the elements of happiness that I have dreamed of for my daughter; and then, too, the friendship which binds you to Pierre would some day lead naturally to a reconciliation between his wife and you. It would all be so happy! But how am I to hope for such a complete and sudden change in Julia's ideas? She will not even allow me to finish my message."

She set out in a flutter of anxiety. She found Julia alone in her room, trying on before a glass her novice's costume. The veil and cloak which would hide her luxuriant hair were lying on the bed; she was dressed simply in a long skirt of white muslin, the folds of which she was adjusting. On seeing her mother come in she blushed; then, beginning to laugh, said:

"Cymodoce in the circus, is it not, mother?"

Clotilde did not reply. She had joined her hands in an attitude of entreaty, and as she gazed at her daughter, began to weep. Julia was visibly affected by this silent grief; two tears glistened in her eyes, and she fell upon her mother's neck; then, making her sit down:

"What do you wish?" said she. "I, too, have a sore spot in my heart, for I love the world. But, aside from my vocation, which is very real, I am obeying a veritable necessity. For me no other existence is possible. I know well that it is my own fault; I have been a little foolish. I ought never to have left you, or, at least, I ought to have returned immediately after your marriage. But now, after all these months, these years even, I ask you, is it possible? Why, I should die of shame. Fancy me in presence of your husband! What should I look like? Besides, he must detest me. The die is cast—and it is I who, reviewing the past, know it—in his house. Indeed, in every way, I should be a terrible burden to both of you."

"But, my dear little girl," said Clotilde, "no one detests you; you would be welcomed like the prodigal son, with transports of joy."

If it costs you so much to return to my house, if you dread to find or bring there any weariness of the flesh—and God knows how much you deceive yourself—but, even if you dread this, is that any reason why you should bury yourself alive and break my heart? Cannot you return to the world without returning to my house, and without having to face any of the embarrassments which terrify you? That could be managed very easily, you know."

"How?" said Julia, quietly; "by my getting married?"

"Certainly," said Clotilde, shaking her head gently, and lowering her voice.

"But, *mon Dieu!* my mother, where is the likelihood? Even if I should be in the humor—and that is far enough off—I know no one, and no one knows me."

"There is some one," replied Clotilde, with increasing nervousness—"some one whom you know intimately, and who—who adores you."

Julia opened her large eyes, astonished and inquiring, and after a brief pause of reflection:

"Pierre?" said she.

"Yes," murmured Clotilde, white with anxiety.

Julia's eyebrows gently contracted; she raised her beautiful head and remained for a few moments with her eyes fixed on the ceiling; then, with a slight movement of the shoulders:

"Why not?" said she, in a serious tone. "As well he as another!"

Clotilde allowed a faint cry to escape her, and seizing her daughter's hands:

"You are willing?" said she; "you are quite willing? Is it true? You will let me take back this answer?"

"Yes—but change the wording!" said Julia, laughing.

"Oh! my darling, darling *mignonne!*" cried Clotilde, covering Julia's hands with kisses; "but tell me once more that it is true—that you won't have changed your mind by to-morrow."

"No," said Julia, firmly, in her deep, musical voice.

Then she thought a little and continued: "Truly, he loves me, this big boy?"

"Like a madman."

"Poor fellow! And he is waiting for the answer?"

"In fear and trembling."

"Well, go and pacify him. We will resume the conversation to-morrow. I want to put my brain in a little order, you understand, after all this topsy-turvy business. But don't worry; I have made up my mind."

When Madame de Lucan returned home, Pierre de Moras was waiting in the drawing-room. On seeing her he became very pale.

"Pierre!" said she, all out of breath, "kiss me; you are my son!
... with proper respect; if you please; with proper respect!" she added, laughing; while he raised her, and pressed her to his breast.

A little later he went through the same performance with the Baroness de Pers, who had been summoned in haste.

"My dear," said the baroness to him, "I am delighted, delighted! but you are choking me. Yes, yes . . . it is very good, my boy . . . but you are choking me, really. Restrain yourself, my dear; restrain yourself. That dear little child! it is charming of her; really charming! At bottom, it is a heart of gold! And she has good taste, too; for you are very handsome, my dear; very handsome, very handsome! Besides, I always believed that she would think twice when the time came for cutting off her hair. It is true that hers is beautiful, poor child!"

And the baroness burst into tears; then, speaking to the count between her sobs: "You will never be unhappy any more; *you* I mean; she is a goddess!"

M. de Lucan, though deeply touched by this family scene, above all by Clotilde's joy, received the unexpected news with more coolness. Besides being, in general, little given to open displays of feeling, he was, in the depth of his heart, uneasy and bodeful. The outcome of this marriage was most uncertain, and his profound friendship for the count made him apprehensive about it. From a feeling of delicate consideration for Julia he had not dared to tell him all he believed about her character. He tried to repel, as unjust and prejudiced, the opinion which he had formed of her; but he could not help recalling the terrible child whom he had formerly known, sometimes carried away like a whirlwind, sometimes thoughtful and wrapped up in gloomy reserve. He tried to imagine her as she had since been described to him—grown-up, beautiful, ascetic; then, all of a sudden, he saw her casting her veils to the wind, like one of the fantastic nuns in "Robert the Devil," and tripping back into the world again with a light foot. Out of all these diverse impressions he compounded, in spite of himself, a figure, part chimera, part sphynx, with which it was very difficult to associate the idea of domestic happiness.

During the whole evening they talked in family conclave of the complications which might interfere with the projected marriage, and the means of avoiding them. M. de Lucan entered into these details with great good-will, and declared that, for his part, he would lend himself most willingly to whatever arrangements his step-daughter might desire—a precaution which ought not to be useless.

On the following morning Clotilde went to the convent. Julia, after having listened with somewhat ironical nonchalance to her mother's account of the transports and the delight of her fiancé, assumed a more serious air.

"And your husband," said she, "what does he think?"

"He is charmed, like the rest of us."

"I am going to ask you a singular question; does he count on being present at our marriage?"

"As you wish."

"Listen, my good little mother, but don't distress yourself beforehand. I feel, indeed, that some day or other this marriage will reunite us all; but let me have time to become reconciled to the idea. Give me a few months to blot out the old Julia, and to forget her myself—say, you are quite willing, are you not?"

"Whatever will please you," said Clotilde, sighing.

"I beg it of you; tell him that I beg it of him, also."

"I will tell him so; but you know Pierre is here?"

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*—where?"

"I left him in the garden."

"In the garden! What imprudence, my mother! these nuns will tear him to pieces, like Orpheus, for you can easily believe that he is not in the odor of sanctity here."

They sent for M. de Moras, who came in in great haste. When he entered, Julia began to laugh, which smoothed over his reception. During their interview she had several of those spells of nervous laughter which are so useful to women in difficult situations. Deprived of this resource, and having no other eloquence at command, M. de Moras contented himself with timidly kissing the beautiful hands of his cousin; but his handsome, manly face shone with joy, and his big blue eyes were humid with happy love. He seemed to leave a favorable impression.

"I have never considered him from this point of view," said Julia to her mother; "he is really very handsome; it is a splendid husband."

The marriage took place three months later, privately and without any display. The Count de Moras and his young wife departed the same evening for Italy.

M. de Lucan had left Paris two or three weeks previously, and had taken possession of an old family residence at the further end of Normandy, where Clotilde hastened to join him immediately after Julia's departure.

IV.

VASTVILLE, the patrimonial estate of the De Lucan family, is situated at a short distance from the sea on the west coast of Norman Finisterre. It is a mansion with elevated roofs and wrought-iron balconies. It dates from the time of Louis XIII, having replaced an old castle, some ruins of which still serve to decorate the park. It is hidden in a nook of ground, densely wooded, and is led up to by a long avenue of ancient elms. The thick woods which enclose it almost on every side give it a singularly secluded and melancholy aspect. This mass of woods marks at this point of the peninsula the last effort of Norman vegetation. As soon as its border is passed, the view suddenly opens, without obstruction, over the immense wastes which form the triangular plain of Cape la Hogue. Stretches of heath and furze; stone fences, uncemented; here and there a granite

cross ; to right and left the distant swell of the ocean—such is the landscape, stern but impressive, which is suddenly unfolded beneath the full light of heaven.

M. de Lucan had been born at Vastville. The poetic memories of his childhood were associated in his imagination with the natural poetry of the scene, and made it dear to him. Under a pretence of hunting he made to it an annual pilgrimage. Only since his marriage had he forgone this loving custom, so as not to leave Clotilde, whom her daughter kept in Paris ; but now that they had recovered their freedom, it was agreed that they could bury themselves for a time in this retreat. Clotilde knew Vastville only from the enthusiastic descriptions of her husband : she loved it through faith, and for her it was already an enchanted spot. When, however, the carriage which brought her from the station got among the wooded hills, in the gloomy avenue which sloped up to the chateau, a chill came over her.

"*Mon Dieu*, my dear," said she, laughing, "it is the Castle of Udolpho, this castle of yours !"

Lucan apologized for his chateau as well as he was able, and also protested that he would be ready to leave it on the morrow if she had no better impression of it at sunrise.

It was not long before she adored it. Her happiness, so constrained heretofore, expanded freely for the first time in this solitude, and told her of joyous days to come. She wished even to spend the winter there, awaiting Julia, who would return to France in the course of the coming year. Lucan made some objection to this proposal, which seemed to him altogether too heroic for a Parisienne, but ended, nevertheless, by adopting it, too happy, himself, to frame the romance of his love in this romantic spot. He strove, moreover, to minimize whatever undue strain might attend their stay, by introducing to Clotilde some relatives in the neighborhood, and by obtaining for her at intervals her mother's society. Madame de Pers was quite willing to lend herself to this combination, even though the country in general was hateful to her, and Vastville, in particular, had in her eyes a sinister aspect.

She professed that she heard knockings in the walls, and groanings in the woods at night. She could sleep only with one eye, and with two candles burning. The magnificent cliffs which ran along at a short distance from the shore, and which they tried to make her admire, gave her a disagreeable sensation.

"Very beautiful !" said she ; "very wild ! perfectly wild ! but they make me uncomfortable. I feel as if I were on the top of the towers of Notre-Dame ! Besides, my children, love gilds everything, and I understand your transports perfectly ; but, as for me, you will excuse me if I do not join in them. I could never go into ecstasies over this country. I like the country as well as another ; but here—this is not the country ; it is a desert—Arabia Petrea—I don't know what. And as for your chateau, my dear—I am sorry to say it—but it is a

house of crime. If you will only make proper search you will find that someone has been murdered in it."

"Why, no, dear madame," said Lucan, laughing; "I know the history of my family perfectly, and I can guarantee——"

"Rest assured, my dear, that someone has been murdered—in days gone by. You know that, in those days, they didn't worry over a little thing like that."

Julia's letters to her mother were frequent. They were a true journal of travel, written *à la diable*, with striking originality of style, and with the vividness of the impressions corrected by the tinge of supercilious irony which was characteristic of the writer. Of her husband Julia spoke briefly enough, saying nothing but good of him. Very frequently there was a brief and friendly postscript addressed to M. de Lucan.

M. de Moras was more sober in his descriptions. He seemed to see in Italy nothing but his wife. He extolled her beauty, still more heightened, said he, by contact with all these marvels of art with which she had become impregnated. He praised her exquisite taste, her intelligence, and even her disposition. In these respects she was quite matured, and he found her almost too wise and too sedate for her age. These particulars enchanted Clotilde, and filled her heart with a perfect peace such as she had never before known.

The count's letters were not less encouraging for the future than for the present. He did not think, he said, that he ought to importune Julia on the subject of her reconciliation with her step-father; but he thought her well disposed to it. Moreover, he was preparing her for it, more and more, by constantly talking to her about the long friendship which had bound him to M. de Lucan, of their past life, of their travels, of the perils which they had shared. Julia not only listened to these narratives without repugnance, but often suggested them, as though she regretted her prejudices, and were seeking for good reasons to remove them:

"Now, Pylades, tell me about Orestes!" she would say to him.

After having spent the whole winter and a part of spring in Italy, M. and Madame de Moras visited Switzerland, announcing their intention of staying there until midsummer. M. and Madame Lucan thought of going there to join them, and thus precipitate a reconciliation which no longer seemed more than a matter of form. Clotilde was preparing to submit this project to her daughter, when she received, one beautiful May morning, the following letter, dated from Paris:

"DEAREST MOTHER: More Switzerland! Too much Switzerland! I am here. Do not disturb yourself. I know how much you are enjoying yourself at Vastville. We shall go and find you there one of these mornings, and we will return all together in the autumn. I only ask for a few days to prepare for our future installation here.

"We are at the Grand Hotel. I did not wish to make a descent upon

you, for all sorts of reasons, any more than upon my grandmother, who, at once, very kindly wrote me to do so :

“Ah ! *mon Dieu* ! my dear children, but it is impossible. At an hotel ! it is not proper. You cannot remain at an hotel. Come to my house. *Mon Dieu* ! you will be very uncomfortable. You will be encamped. I don't even know how I am going to feed you, for my cook is confined to his bed, as well as my idiot of a coachman, who has a black eye—this by way of parenthesis. But people don't arrive in this fashion. You fall on me like two flower-pots. It's unthinkable ! You are well, otherwise, my dear ? I don't ask it. It is evident enough.

“And you, my beautiful puss ? why, it is a star ; a real star. Hide yourself. You make my eyes ache. You have trunks ? Well, what then ? they can put them in the drawing-room. And as for yourself, you can have my room. I will hire a housekeeper and a livery-coachman. You won't put me about in the least ; not in the least ; not in the least.’

“In short, we have not accepted.

“But the explanation of this sudden return ? Here it is :

“‘Doesn't Switzerland bore you, my dear ?’ I asked my husband.

“‘Switzerland bores me,’ replied that faithful echo.

“‘Well, let us go, then.’

“And we went.

“Happy, and moved to the depths of the soul at the thought of holding you in my arms,

“JULIA.

“P.S.—I beg M. de Lucan not to be frightened.”

The days which followed were deliciously busy for Clotilde. She, herself, unpacked the trunks which followed one another without interruption, and arranged their contents with her own motherly hands. She unfolded, she refolded, she caressed the skirts, the fine, perfumed linen, which already were like a part of, a sweet emanation from, her daughter's body. Lucan, a little jealous, surprised her lovingly contemplating these beautiful dresses. She went to the stables to see Julia's horse, which had followed the boxes closely ; she gave him sugar, and talked with him. She filled with flowers and green branches the rooms set apart for the young household.

This happy fever soon had its happy termination. About eight days after her arrival in Paris, Julia wrote that she and her husband expected to leave that evening, and would be at Cherbourg the following morning. This was the nearest station to Vastville. Clotilde naturally got ready to go and bring them in her carriage. M. de Lucan, after talking the matter over with her, came to the conclusion that he had better not go with her. He was afraid of putting a constraint upon the first joys of the return ; but not wishing that Julia should interpret his absence as a lack of cordiality, he resolved to go on horseback to meet the travellers.

It was in the first days of June. Clotilde went away very early, as fresh and radiant as the dawn itself. Lucan set out slowly on his horse a couple of hours later. At this season the Norman roads are charming. The hawthorn hedges scent the whole country, and everywhere cast across the roadsides their blossoms of roseate snow. A wealth of fresh verdure, bestarred with wild flowers, covers the sides of the ditches. All this, beneath the bright morning sun, is a feast for the eyes. Contrary to his custom, however, M. de Lucan gave only a heedless attention to this scene of smiling nature. He was absorbed, to a degree which astonished himself, in his coming meeting with his step-daughter. Julia had taken so strong a hold on his mind that his mind had preserved an exaggerated impression of her. He tried in vain to restore to her her true proportions, which, after all, were those of a child—formerly an *enfant terrible*, now an *enfant prodigue*. He had got in the habit of investing her in his imagination with a mysterious importance and a sort of fatal spell of which it was difficult to divest her. He laughed, and then became exasperated, at his weakness; but now, when he was to look in the face of this sphynx, whose mere shadow had so long troubled his life, and who was coming in person to his hearth, he experienced a feeling of agitation, mingled with curiosity and vague uneasiness.

An uncovered carriage, shielded by parasols, appeared on the summit of a declivity; Lucan saw a head leaning forward, and a handkerchief waving outside the carriage, and he immediately urged his horse to a gallop. Almost at the same instant the carriage stopped, and a young woman jumped briskly onto the road; she turned to address some words to her fellow-travellers, and then came on by herself to meet him. Not wishing to be outdone in politeness, he dismounted, gave his horse to the servant who followed him, and hastened toward the young woman, whom he did not recognize, but who was evidently Julia. She came to him without quickening her steps, with a gliding motion, lightly swaying her flexible figure. While drawing near, she threw back her veil with a swift movement of the hand, and Lucan was able to discover in this youthful face, in these large and somewhat melancholy eyes, in the long and perfect arch of the eyebrows, some lineaments of the child whom he had known.

As Julia's gaze met that of Lucan, her pale complexion became purple. He bowed to her very low, with a smile of affectionate greeting.

"Welcome!" said he.

"Thanks, monsieur," said Julia, in a voice whose deep, melodious ring struck Lucan; "friends? is it not so?"

And she stretched both hands toward him with a charming resoluteness.

He drew her gently to him, to kiss her, but fancying he felt a slight resistance in her suddenly stiffened arms, he contented himself with kissing the wrist instead of the glove. Then, affecting to look at her with a courteous admiration, which, indeed, was sincere :

"I have really a mind to ask you," said he, laughing, "to whom I have the honor of speaking."

"You find me grown?" said she, showing her dazzling teeth.

"Astonishingly," said Lucan; "most astonishingly. I understand Pierre perfectly."

"Poor Pierre!" said Julia; "he loves you well! Don't let us allow him to languish any longer, please."

They went toward the carriage, in front of which M. de Moras was awaiting them, and while walking side by side:

"What a pretty country!" continued Julia; "and the sea quite near?"

"Quite near."

"We will go for a ride after déjeuner, shall we not?"

"Most willingly; but you must be horribly tired, my dear child—pardon!—my dear— By the way, what *do* you wish me to call you?"

"Call me madame; I was such a naughty child."

She had a sudden fit of laughter, pleasant but a trifle equivocal, which was familiar to him. Then, raising her voice:

"You can come, Pierre; your friend is my friend!"

She left the two men to grasp each other cordially by the hand, sprang into the carriage, and, resuming her seat beside her mother:

"My mother," said she, kissing her, "it was got over very nicely. Was it not, Monsieur de Lucan?"

"Very nicely," said Lucan, laughing, "saving some details."

"Oh! too hard, monsieur!" said Julia, enveloping herself in her furs.

A moment later, M. de Lucan was galoping beside the coach-door, while the three travellers in the carriage gave themselves up to one of those unreserved talks which follow crises happily ended. Clotilde, henceforth in the enjoyment of all her loves, floated in the blue ether.

"You are very pretty, my mother," said Julia. "With a grown-up daughter like me, that is wicked."

And she kissed her.

Lucan, while taking part in the conversation, and doing the honors of the scenery, tried to make a mental summary of his impressions with regard to the introduction which had just taken place. In the end, he thought, like his step-daughter, that it had been got over very nicely, but not to absolute perfection. Perfection would have been to have found in Julia a thoroughly unaffected woman, who would have thrown herself heartily on his neck, and laughed with him over her spoiled-child escapade. Still, he had never expected such frankness from her. Under the trying circumstances she had been everything that could be expected from one of her disposition; she had shown

herself pleasantly friendly. She had, it is true, given a somewhat dramatic and solemn turn to this first interview; but she was romantic, and, as Lucan was likewise passably so, this extravagance had not displeased him.

He had also been agreeably surprised at Madame de Moras' beauty, which was really striking. The classic purity of her features, the deep glow of her blue eyes, fringed with long, dark lashes, the exquisitely harmonious lines of her figure, were not her only or, indeed, her principle attractions. Her rare and personal fascination she owed to a sort of singular grace, a combination of suppleness and strength, which lent enchantment to her slightest movement. In the play of her features, in her walk, in her gestures, there was the superlative freedom of a woman who is not conscious of a single weak spot in her beauty, and who moves, displays herself, and expands with all the unconsciousness of a child in its cradle or a deer in the forest. Fashioned as she was, it was no trouble to her to dress well; the simplest toilets fitted themselves to her figure with a perfection of elegance which caused the Baroness de Pers to say, in her not strictly accurate but expressive language:

"One could dress her with a suède glove."

During the first day, and the days which followed, Julia established herself still further in the good graces of M. de Lucan by being seized with a lively affection for the Château de Vastville and the surrounding landscape. The chateau pleased her by its romantic style, its old-fashioned garden ornamented with yoke-elms and clipped yew-trees, the lonely avenues of the park, and its melancholy woods strewn with ruins. She went into ecstasies over the immense wastes of heath swept by the ocean gales, the trees with their tops bent down and convulsed, the lofty granite cliffs hollowed by the eternal waves.

"There is plenty of character about this," said she, laughing; and as she also had plenty, she felt herself in her element.

She had found her country, and she was happy. Her mother, to whom she paid up, in passionate outpourings of tenderness, all arrears of affection, was even more so.

The days were mostly spent in riding. After dinner, Julia, in the joyous but somewhat feverish mood which animated her, would tell of her travels, pleasantly burlesquing her own raptures and the comparative coldness of her husband before the masterpieces of ancient art. These recollections she would illustrate by scenes of mimicry in which she displayed the address of a fairy, the verve of an artist, and sometimes the awkwardness of a beginner. By a turn of the hand, with a flower, a bit of rag, and a sheet of paper, she would make herself a headdress—Neapolitan, Roman, or Sicilian. She would act scenes from a ballet or an opera, pushing back her train with a tragic sweep of the foot, and giving voice to some of the senseless exclamations of Italian opera:

"O ciel! cruel! perfido! O dio! perdona!"

Then, kneeling on an arm-chair, she would imitate the voice and gestures of some preacher whom she had heard in Rome, and who did not seem to have greatly edified her. In none of these different attitudes did she lose an atom of grace, but preserved her distinction even in her most ludicrous poses. Having got through with these absurdities, she would resume her air of a queen *ennuyée*.

Under the spell of the animation and fascination of this brilliant creature, M. de Lucan willingly forgave Julia the caprices and singularities of which she was prodigal, above all with her step-father. In general, she behaved toward him as she had done from the beginning, friendly and politely, though with a tinge of lofty irony. But she had violent contrasts of mood. Lucan sometimes surprised her gaze fastened on him with a painful, almost fierce expression. One day she repulsed with brusque rudeness the hand which he offered to her to assist her in dismounting from her horse or climbing over a stile. She seemed to shun occasions of being alone with him; and when she could not avoid a few moments tête-à-tête, she speedily showed an angry uneasiness, and then a saucy impertinence. Lucan thought that she sometimes reproached herself for too much belying her old feelings, and that she considered that she owed it to herself to present them with a token of loyalty from time to time. He was quite content, however, that she should reserve for himself alone these equivocal signs, and that she did not trouble her mother with them. In any case, he attached but slight importance to them. If in his step-daughter's affectionate attitude there was, even yet, something of struggle and of effort, it was an excusable feature in so haughty a nature as hers; it was the final barrier, which he flattered himself he would speedily overcome by redoubling his delicate attentions.

About two weeks after Julia's arrival, there was a ball at the Marquise de Boisfresnay's, in her Château de Boisfresnay, situated about two or three leagues from Vastville. M. and Madame de Lucan were on neighborly terms with the marquise. They went to the ball with Julia and her husband, the men in the coupé, the women, on account of their costumes, in the carriage. Toward midnight, Clotilde took her husband aside, and, pointing out her daughter, who was dancing in the next room with a naval officer:

"Hush, my dear," said she; "I have a frightful headache, and Pierre is bored to death, but we haven't the heart to take Julia away so early. Will you do the amiable? You bring her home, and we will go, Pierre and I. We will leave you the carriage."

"Very well, my dear," said Lucan; "go along."

And Clotilde and M. de Moras slipped away at once.

A moment later, Julia, disdainfully passing through the crowd, which made way before her as before an angel of light, lifted her proud head, and made a sign to Lucan.

"I do not see my mother?" said she.

Lucan told her in two words of the arrangement which had just

been made. Her eyes gave a sudden flash, her eyebrows contracted, she shrugged her shoulders slightly, without replying, and returned to the ball-room, opening a passage for herself with the same calm insolence. She again resigned herself to the arm of a naval officer, and seemed to take pleasure in circling round in her splendor. Her ball costume, indeed, gave a strange lustre to her beauty. Her bosom and shoulders, emerging from her corsage with a sort of modest heedlessness, preserved during the animation of the dance the cold and gleaming purity of marble.

Lucan proposed a waltz; she hesitated, but, having consulted her programme, discovered that she had not yet exhausted the list of naval officers, who had rushed in squadrons upon this rich prey. After an hour she got tired of being admired, and asked for the carriage. As she was putting on her wraps in the hall, her step-father offered his services.

"No! I beg of you," said she, impatiently; "men don't understand—not in the least."

Then she threw herself into the carriage with an air of weariness. However, as the horses set out:

"Smoke, monsieur," she said, more amiably.

Lucan thanked her for the permission, but without profiting by it. Then, while making himself comfortable beside her:

"You were quite beautiful this evening, my dear child!" said he.

"Monsieur," said Julia, in a careless but positive tone, "I forbid you to think me beautiful, and I forbid you to call me 'my dear child.'"

"As you please," said Lucan. "Well, then, you are not beautiful, you are not dear to me, and you are not a child."

"As for child, no!" said she, energetically.

She put the hood of her cloak over her head, folded her arms over her breast, and nestled herself into her corner, where the rays of the moon came from time to time to sport in their brightness.

"May one sleep?" she asked.

"Why, most certainly. Shall I close the window?"

"If you please. My flowers are not disagreeable?"

"Not at all."

After a short silence.

"M. de Lucan?" said Julia.

"Dear madame?"

"Explain to me the customs, for there are some things that I do not well understand. Is it allowable, is it proper, that a woman of my age, and a gentleman of yours, should return from a ball, tête-à-tête, at two o'clock in the morning?"

"But," said Lucan, not without a certain gravity, "I am not 'a gentleman'; I am your mother's husband."

"Ah! without doubt, you are my mother's husband!" said she, scanning the words with a vibration in her voice which made Lucan dread an explosion.

But, seeming to master a violent emotion, she continued, in an almost playful tone :

"Yes, you are my mother's husband, and you are also, according to me, a very bad husband to my mother."

"According to you," said Lucan, quietly. "And in what way?"

"Because you do not suit her at all."

"Have you consulted your mother on this subject, my dear lady? It seems to me that she is a better judge than you."

"I have no need to consult her. It is enough to see you both. My mother is an angelic creature—and you—are not."

"What am I, then?"

"A romanticist—a prey to unrest ; everything to the contrary, in fact. Some day or other you will betray her."

"Never !" said Lucan, with some sternness.

"Are you quite sure of that, monsieur?" fixing her eyes on him from beneath her hood.

"Dear madame," replied M. de Lucan, "you asked me a moment ago to be good enough to instruct you as to what is proper and what is not. Well, it is not proper that we should take—you your mother, and I my wife, as a text for a pleasantry of this kind ; and, by consequence, it is proper that we should be silent."

She was silent, remained motionless, and closed her eyes. After a moment, Lucan saw a tear detach itself from her long eyelashes, and roll down her cheek.

"*Mon Dieu*, my child," said he, "I have wounded you ; I sincerely make my apologies."

"Keep your apologies!" said she, in a hollow voice, suddenly opening her great eyes. "I want no more of your apologies than of your lessons ! Your lessons ! how have I deserved such humiliation? I do not understand. What could be more innocent than my words? And what, then, would you have me say to you? Is it my fault if I am here alone with you? if I am obliged to talk to you? if I know not what to say to you? Why was I exposed to it all? Why ask of me more than I can perform? They presume too much on my strength ! It is enough—it is a thousand times too much already—this comedy that I go through every day. God knows I am weary of it !"

Lucan with difficulty overcame the painful astonishment which had seized him.

"Julia," said he, at length, "you have been good enough to tell me that we were friends : I believed it. Is it not true, then?"

"No."

Having flung this word at him with sombre energy, she enveloped her head and face in her cloak, and during the rest of the journey remained plunged in a silence which M. de Lucan did not disturb.

AFTER some hours of troubled sleep M. de Lucan rose the next morning with a face full of care. The resumption of hostilities which had been so unmistakably notified to him presaged beyond question new distresses for his peace of mind, new lacerations for Clotilde's happiness. He was, then, about to be involved once more in those hateful turmoils which had so long tormented his life, and, this time, without any hope of release. How, in truth, was it possible not to despair forever of this ungovernable temper, which years and common-sense, and the utmost consideration and tenderness, had left unmoved in its prejudices and its hatreds? How was it possible to understand—above all, how would it be ever possible to conquer—the fantastic sentiment, or rather, the mania, which had taken possession of this self-centred soul, and which there perpetuated itself in secret, ever ready to explode in outbreaks of fury?

Clotilde and Julia had not yet made their appearance. Lucan went to take a turn in the garden, to breathe once more the peace of his beloved solitude, while awaiting the expected storms. At the end of an arbor of yoke-elm he caught sight of the Comte de Moras, leaning his arm on the pedestal of an old statue, his eyes fixed on the ground. M. de Moras had never been a dreamer, but, since his arrival at the chateau, he had on more than one occasion given Lucan a glimpse of moods of melancholy quite foreign to his nature. Lucan had been uneasy in consequence, but, as he himself objected to have his confidence forced, he had abstained from interrogating his friend.

They shook hands on meeting.

"You came back late last night?" asked the count.

"About three o'clock."

"Oh! *povero!* By the way, thanks for your kindness to Julia. How did she behave to you?"

"Oh—well," said Lucan; "a trifle singular, as always."

"Oh! singular! . . . that comes without effort."

He smiled drearily enough, took Lucan's arm, and drawing him into the shadow of the yoke-elms:

"Now, my dear fellow," said he, in a restrained voice, "between ourselves, what is the matter with Julia?"

"How! my dear fellow?"

"Yes; what kind of a woman is my wife? If you know, tell me, I beg of you."

"Pardon, but it is of you that I should ask that."

"Of me?" said the count; "but I am absolutely ignorant of it. It is an enigma of which I am unable to discover the solution. She charms me, and she terrifies me. She is singular, do you say? She is more than that; she is fantastic. She is not of this world. I know not whom I have married. You remember that creature, beau-

tiful but cold, in the 'Arabian Nights,' who used to get up at night to go and indulge in orgies in the cemeteries. The idea is absurd, but Julia makes me think of her."

The troubled look of the count, the constrained laugh which accompanied his words, moved Lucan greatly.

"Then," said he, "you are unhappy?"

"One can do no more," said Moras, pressing Lucan's hand strongly. "I adore her, and I am jealous—without knowing of whom or of what. She does not love me. . . . and yet, she loves she must love! How can I doubt it? You see her; she is the perfect picture of passion; the fire of passion overflows in her words, in her looks, in the blood in her veins! And yet, to me she is a statue frosted, in a tomb."

"Frankly, my dear fellow," said Lucan, "you seem to greatly exaggerate your troubles. In reality, they seem to me to be reduced to a trifling matter. To begin with, you are, I believe, deeply in love for the first time in your life. You have heard much talk of love, of passion, and have no doubt looked for exaggerated marvels from it. In the second place, I would remind you that very young women are rarely very passionate. The species of coldness of which you seem to complain, then, is quite explicable without the intervention of the supernatural. Young women, I repeat, are idealists; their love has no corporeal object. You ask of whom or of what you should be jealous? Well, be jealous of all this vague romanticism which torments youthful imaginations—of the wind, of the tempest, of desert plains, of beetling cliffs, of my old manor-house, of my woods and my ruins, for Julia adores them all! Be jealous, above all, of the ardent worship which she cherishes for her father's memory, and which even yet absorbs—I have had recent proof of it—the most active part of her passion."

"You do me good," replied Pierre de Moras, drawing a breath of relief; "and yet I have told myself all that. But if she does not love she will love. . . . she will love some day. . . . and if it should not be me! If she gave to another all that she has refused to me! My friend," added the count, turning pale, "I should kill her with my own hand."

"Lover!" said Lucan. "And I—I, then, should count for nothing?"

"You, my friend?" said Moras, with emotion; "you see my trust! I have betrayed to you my shameful weakness. Ah! why did I ever know any other sentiment than that of friendship? It alone gives back all that has been given to it; it strengthens instead of enervates; it is the only passion worthy of a man. Never forsake me, my friend; you will console me for all."

The bell which announced the hour of déjeuner recalled them to the chateau. Julia complained that she was fatigued and unwell. Under cover of this excuse, her silent mood, her answers, more than crisp, to the polite inquiries of Lucan, passed at first without attract-

ing the attention of her mother and her husband ; but during the rest of the day, and amid the various incidents of the family life, Julia's aggressive tone and disagreeable manner toward Lucan were too strongly marked to pass without notice. As Lucan, however, had the patience and good taste to seem not to remark them, the others kept their impressions to themselves. The dinner, that day, was more serious than usual. Toward the end of the meal the conversation touched on a burning subject, and Julia it was who directed it thither, though without malice prepense. She exhausted her spirit of raillery on a son of the Marquise de Boisfresnay, a bantling of eight or ten, who had greatly irritated her the previous night, by bringing his consequential little body into the midst of the ball, and pleasantly launching himself like a spinning-top between the legs of the masculine dancers and onto the dresses of the feminine ones. The marquise was transported with delight at these delicious frolics. Clotilde gently excused her, pleading that the child was her only son.

"That is no reason for making society a present of one more nuisance," said Lucan.

"Besides," replied Julia, anxious to repudiate her own ideas now that her step-father had sided with them, "it is well known that spoiled children turn out the best."

"There are some exceptions, at least," said Lucan, coldly.

"I do not know of any," said Julia.

"*Mon Dieu !*" said the Count de Moras, in a conciliatory tone, "right or wrong, it is quite the fashion nowadays to spoil children."

"Then it is a criminal fashion," said Lucan. "Formerly they whipped them, and made men of them."

"When people have such ideas," said Julia, "they do not deserve to have children—and they have none," she added, with a direct gaze which aggravated the unkind—even cruel—intent of her words.

M. de Lucan turned very pale. Clotilde's eyes filled with tears. Julia, embarrassed by her victory, went out into the hall. Her mother, after remaining for several minutes with her face buried in her hands, arose and went to join her.

"Ah, now, my dear fellow," said M. de Moras, as soon as he found himself alone with Lucan, "what happened between you last night? You were going to tell me something about it a while ago, but I was so absorbed with my own egotistical broodings that I paid no attention. What, then, occurred?"

"Nothing serious. I merely convinced myself that she has not forgiven me for having occupied a place which, according to her, ought never to have been filled."

"What do you advise me to do, George?" replied M. de Moras. "I will do whatever you wish."

"My dear fellow," said Lucan, placing his hands gently on the count's shoulders, "do not be offended, but under the circumstances our living together will be difficult. Don't let us wait for some irre-

parable scene. In Paris we can see each other without inconvenience. I think you had better take her there."

"Supposing she will not go?"

"I should speak firmly," said Lucan, looking him in the eyes. "I have to work this evening. That will be all right. I shall see you again presently, my dear fellow."

M. de Lucan shut himself in his library. An hour later, Clotilde found him there. He could see that she had been crying much, but she held up her face to him with her sweetest smile. As he kissed her, she merely murmured, in a low voice:

"Forgive her!"

And the winning creature hastily retired, hiding her emotion.

On the following morning, M. de Lucan, who, according to his custom, had risen very early, had been working for some time near his library window, which opened at a little height above the garden. He was by no means slightly surprised at seeing the face of his step-daughter appear through the branches of the honeysuckle which was entwined in the ironwork of the balcony.

"Monsieur," said she, in her musical voice, "are you very busy?"

"*Mon Dieu*, no!" replied he, rising.

"The weather is divine," she rejoined; "wouldn't you like to come and walk with me?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes."

"Well, then, come. *Dieu!* how sweet it smells, the honeysuckle!"

And she plucked several blossoms of it, which she flung through the window at Lucan, with a burst of laughter. He fastened them in his buttonhole, with the gesture of a man who understands nothing of what is going on, but is by no means displeased.

He found her in a fresh morning toilet, impatiently pawing the gravel with her dainty foot.

"Monsieur de Lucan," she said, gaily, "my mother wishes me to be amiable to you; my husband wishes it; heaven also, I suppose. That is why I wish it equally, and I assure you that I can be very amiable when I give myself the trouble—you will see!"

"Is it possible?" said Lucan.

"You will see, monsieur," replied she, making him a theatrical curtsy with her own inimitable grace.

"And where shall we go, madame?"

"Wherever you please—in the woods, at random, if you like."

The wooded hills were so close to the chateau that they bordered one of the sides of the court with a fringe of shadow. M. de Lucan and Julia took the first path which presented itself, but Julia speedily left the beaten track, and went hither and thither, from tree to tree, straying at will, beating the thickets with her cane, gathering flowers or leaves, stopping in ecstasy before the streaks of light which here and there illumined the carpet of moss, frankly intoxicated with the exercise, the open air, the sun, and with her own youth

While going along she flung at her companion words of pleasant comradeship, absurd questions, childish jests ; and made the woods re-echo with the melody of her laughter.

In her admiration for wild flowers she had gradually gathered a veritable bundle, the custody of which M. de Lucan accepted with resignation. Seeing that he was succumbing beneath its weight, she sat down on the roots of an old oak, in order, she said, to make a selection from the miscellaneous heap. She took the bundle of leaves and flowers in her lap and began to throw away everything that seemed to be of an inferior quality. She handed to Lucan, who was seated a few paces from her, what she deemed should be kept for the final bouquet, gravely giving the reasons for her decision to the plant which she examined.

"You, my dear—too scraggy ! You—pretty, but too short ! You—you smell bad ! You—you look common !"

Then, abruptly changing to another subject, which at first did not fail to disquiet M. de Lucan :

"It was you, was it not," said she, "who advised Pierre to talk to me with firmness ?"

"I ?" said Lucan ; "what an idea !"

"It must have been you. You," she continued, resuming her talk to her flowers—"you have a sickly look ; good-evening. Yes, it must have been you. To look at you, one would think you were gentle, but you are most severe, most tyrannical——"

"Ferocious," said Lucan.

"But I do not complain of it. You were right ; poor Pierre is too easy with me. I like a man to be a man. He is very brave, however, is he not ?"

"Desperately," said Lucan. "He is capable of the greatest energy."

"He has the look of it, and yet with me—he is an angel."

"That is because he loves you."

"Very probably ! Some of these flowers are curious. This one they might call a little lady."

"I sincerely trust that you too love him—my worthy Pierre ?"

"Very probably, also."

After a pause, she shook her head.

"And why should I love him ?"

"A fine question !" said Lucan. "Why, because he is supremely worthy of being loved ; because he has every kind of merit—intellect, heart, and even good looks ; because, finally, you have married him."

"Monsieur de Lucan, do you want me to tell you a secret ?"

"Certainly."

"That journey to Italy was very unfortunate for me."

"How so ?"

"You can imagine that, before my marriage, I did not exactly think myself ugly, but that I thought myself fairly good-looking."

"Yes—well ?"

Well, in travelling through Italy, in the midst of all those memorials and works of marble which are so much admired, I was filled with strange reflections. I said to myself that these princesses and goddesses of the ancient world, who had turned the brains of shepherds and kings, and on whose account wars had been waged and sacrileges committed, were, after all, creatures pretty nearly of my own kind. Then came to me the fatal idea of my beauty. I discovered that I had at command an exceptional power; that I was a thing consecrated, who ought not to give myself for a common price; who should only be the recompense of—what shall I say?—some great deed or—great crime!”

Lucan remained for a moment confounded by the audacious frankness of this avowal. He thought best to laugh at it.

“But, my dear Julia,” said he, “look here! you have mistaken your century. We are not living in the times when they went to war about a pair of beautiful eyes. You had better speak to Pierre; he has everything needed to furnish the requisite great deed; as for the crime, I think you had better give that up.”

“Do you think so?” said Julia. “That’s a pity!” she added, bursting out laughing. “You see, at any rate, that I am telling you all the foolishness that passes through my head. That is amiable, I hope?”

“Extremely amiable,” said Lucan. “Go on.”

“With this precious encouragement, monsieur——” said she, rising and finishing the sentence with a curtsy. “But, in the meantime, let us go to déjeuner. I hand you my bouquet. Hold the tops downward. Walk in front, monsieur, and by the shortest way, I beg, for I have an appetite which wrings tears from me.”

Lucan took the path which led most directly to the chateau. She followed with active steps, sometimes humming a cavatina, sometimes giving him fresh instructions as to the way to carry her bouquet, or lightly touching him with the end of her cane to get him to admire some bird perched on a branch.

Clotilde and M. de Moras were waiting for them, seated on a bench in front of the door of the chateau. The anxiety depicted on their faces was dissipated at the sound of Julia’s laughing voice. As soon as she saw them, she took the bouquet from Lucan, ran toward Clotilde, and flinging her harvest of flowers into the latter’s arms:

“My mother,” said she, “we have had a delightful walk. I have enjoyed myself immensely. M. de Lucan, also—and, in addition, he has greatly profited by my conversation. I have opened new horizons to him!”

And with her hand she described a great curve in the air, to indicate the immensity of the horizons which she had opened to M. de Lucan. Then, pulling her mother toward the dining-room, and drawing a vigorous breath:

“Oh, that *cuisine* of my mother’s!” said she; “what an odor!”

This delightful mood, which put the chateau in a holiday humor,

did not flag during the whole day ; and—which was something unlooked for—she continued during the next day and the days following without sensible alteration.

If Julia still harbored some remnants of her sullen fits of spleen, she had at least the good feeling to keep them to herself, and to suffer in solitude. More than once, however, they would see her return from her solitary expeditions with her face careworn and her eye sombre ; but she discarded these equivocal manifestations as soon as she was with the rest of the family, for whom she had naught but kindness. She had it, above all, for M. de Lucan, to whom she apparently felt that she had to make many amends. She even took up his time without much scruple, putting him in requisition a little too often, for walks, for tapestry designs, for pianoforte duets, and sometimes for nothing, merely to bother him, stationing herself in front of his window, and interrupting his reading with a string of ridiculous questions. All this was charming ; M. de Lucan yielded with good grace, for which he certainly was not entitled to much credit.

While matters were in this position the Baroness de Pers came for a three days' stay with her daughter. She was at once informed of the miraculous transformation which had taken place in Julia's disposition, and in her behaviour to her step-father. On witnessing the graceful attentions which she lavished on M. de Lucan, Madame de Pers gave demonstrations of the liveliest satisfaction, mingled with which, however, they noticed some traces of her old prejudice against her granddaughter.

On the evening before the departure of the baroness, some neighbors were invited to dinner in her honor, for she had but little taste for family joys, and loved strangers dearly. As the best they could do at short notice, they invited to meet her the *curé* of Vastville, the schoolmaster, the doctor, and the registrar of voters, who were tolerably frequent guests at the chateau, and great admirers of Julia. The affair did not amount to much, but it was enough to furnish the baroness with an opportunity to appear in full dress.

During dinner, Julia seemed to set herself to make a conquest of the *curé*, a simple-minded old man, who submitted to the fascinations of his neighbor with a sort of delighted astonishment. She made him eat, she made him drink, she made him laugh.

"A veritable serpent, is she not, monsieur le *curé*?" said the baroness.

"She is very agreeable," said the *curé*.

"To make one shudder," replied the baroness.

In the evening, after a few turns in the waltz, Julia, accompanied by her husband, sang, in her beautiful contralto voice, some unpublished songs, national melodies, which she had brought from Italy. One of the airs reminded her of a sort of tarentella which she had seen danced by some women of Procida, and she asked her husband to play it. At the same time she told, with great spirit, how the tarentella was danced, giving a rapid idea of the steps, the movements,

and the attitudes ; then, all of a sudden, carried away by the fervor of her description :

"Wait, Pierre," said she ; "I am going to dance it. It will be quite easy."

As her train was in the way, she raised it and asked her mother to pin it up. While this was being done, she herself was not idle. On the mantelpiece and the side-tables were some vases filled with flowers and green stuff ; with swift hands, and standing in front of a mirror, she took from these, and stuck and entwined at random in her magnificent hair, flowers, grasses, bunches of grapes, and ears of corn—everything that came to her fingers. With her head loaded with this crown, heavy and quivering, she stationed herself in the middle of the room.

"Now, my dear !" said she to M. de Moras.

He played the tarantella, which opened with a sort of dance step, slow and solemn, which Julia embodied in her queenly air, curving and uncurving her arms like a garland. Then, the time becoming more and more lively, she struck the floor with faster and faster steps, and with the wild grace and the exultant smile of a young bacchante. She finished abruptly by a long glide, which brought her, all breathless, before M. de Lucan, seated facing her. Then she bent one knee, put her hands to her head with a quick gesture, and, shaking her bowed head, made her crown of flowers fall at his feet, saying, in her sweetest voice, in a tone of respectful homage :

"Monsieur !"

She then stood up, glided away, threw herself into an arm-chair, demurely took off the *curé's* three-cornered hat, and fanned herself with it.

Amid the applause and laughter which filled the room, the Baroness de Pers softly approached de Lucan on the sofa which they occupied together, and said, in a low voice :

"Well, my dear monsieur, what kind of a new style is this? Do you know that I prefer her earlier manner, myself?"

"Indeed, dear madame? Why so?" said Lucan, innocently.

But before the baroness could explain, supposing she had that intention, Julia was seized with a new whim.

"I am positively choking," said she. "Monsieur de Lucan, give me your arm."

She went out, and Lucan accompanied her. She stopped in the hall to cover her head with her large white veil, seemed to hesitate a moment between the door of the garden and that of the court, then, having come to a decision,

"In the Ladies' walk," she said ; "it will be coolest there."

The Ladies' walk, Julia's favorite promenade, opened opposite the avenue, at the other end of the court. It was a slightly inclined pathway between the rocky face of the wooded slope and the edge of a ravine, which seemed to have been one of the ditches of the old

castle. At the bottom, a stream flowed with a melancholy sound, and emptied itself at a short distance into a small pool shaded by willows, and guarded by two antique marble nymphs, from which the Ladies' walk derived its name, perpetuated by local tradition. About half-way between the court and the pool, fragments of a wall and broken arches, the remains of some external fortification, extended up the side of the slope. For some paces these ruins bordered the pathway with their massive buttresses, and cast across it, along with festoons of ivy and brambles, a dense shadow, which night changed to impenetrable darkness. It seemed almost as though the pathway were cut in two by an abyss. The gloomy character of the place was not, however, without some mitigations. The road was strewn with a fine, dry sand; rustic seats were placed against the rocks; and, finally, the grassy slopes which ran down into the ravine were thickly sown with hyacinths, violets, and dwarf rose-bushes, whose perfume ascended to and was retained in this canopied pathway like the odor of incense in a church.

It was near the end of July, and during the day the heat had been oppressive. On leaving the atmosphere of the court, still aflame with the heat of the setting sun, Julia drank in with avidity the cool air of the stream and the woods.

"*Dieu, how good it is!*" said she.

"But I am afraid it may be too good," said Lucan; "allow me." And he doubled the ends of her veil and put them round her neck.

"What! you save my life, then?" said she.

"Why, of course."

"It is magnanimous."

She took some steps in silence, leaning lightly on the arm of her companion, and swaying her graceful figure in her own peculiar fashion.

"Your worthy *curé* must take me for a kind of devil?" she continued.

"He is not the only one," said Lucan, with ironical composure.

She gave a short, constrained laugh; then, after another pause, and going on with her walk, with head bent:

"But you must detest me a little bit less now—tell me?"

"A little bit less."

"Be serious, won't you? I know that I have made you suffer greatly. Don't you begin to forgive me?"

Her voice had an accent of feeling which was not usual, and which touched M. Lucan.

"I forgive you with all my heart, my child," he replied.

She stopped, and seizing both his hands:

"Is it true? Is it ended—our hatred?" said she, in a low, almost timid voice. "You love me a little?"

"I thank you," said Lucan, with moving earnestness; "I thank you, and I love you dearly."

As she drew him gently to her, he held her in a free and affec-

tionate embrace, and touched his lips to her forehead, which she held up to him. At the same instant, however, he felt her supple figure grow rigid, her head fell back, and, giving way completely, she slid into his arms like a felled tree.

There was a seat a couple of steps off, and he carried her thither. After having laid her down, however, instead of lending her his help, he remained in an attitude of strange immobility before her torpid form. There was a long silence, broken only by the gentle, sad murmur of the stream. Waking at last out of his stupor, M. de Lucan called several times in a loud, almost harsh voice :

"Julia ! Julia !"

As she remained motionless, he hastily descended into the ravine, brought up some water in his hand, and bathed her temples with it. After a moment he saw, in the shadow, her great eyes open, and he helped her to raise her head.

"What is it ?" said she, looking at him with a wild gaze ; "what has happened, monsieur ?"

"Why, you fainted," said Lucan, laughing.

"Fainted ?" repeated Julia.

"Doubtless ; it is what I was afraid of ; the cold chilled you. Can you walk ? Come, try."

"Quite well," she said, taking his arm.

Like everyone who suddenly faints away Julia could recall only very indistinctly the event which had led to her swooning.

They had slowly taken the road back to the chateau.

"Fainted !" she continued, gaily. "*Dieu*, how ridiculous !"

Then, with sudden excitement :

"But what did I say ? Did I say anything ?"

"You said, 'I'm cold,' and then you went off."

"Like that ?"

"Like that."

"Did you think I was dead ?"

"I hoped so for a moment," said Lucan, coolly.

"How horrible ! But we were talking previously ? What were we saying ?"

"We made a compact of good-fellowship."

"Well, there wasn't much in that. Monsieur de Lucan !"

"Madame ?"

"Why, you seem as though you were angry because I fainted ?"

"Doubtless. In the first place, I don't like scenes ; and then it was entirely your own fault ; you are so imprudent, so foolish."

"Oh ! *mon Dieu* ! do you want a stick ?" Then, seeing the lights of the chateau : "By the way, you won't vex my mother with this trifling detail, will you ?"

"I will take care not to. Don't be uneasy."

"You are very disagreeable, do you know ?"

"True ; but I passed several minutes there sufficiently painful—"

"I pity you with all my heart," said Julia, drily.

She removed her veil in the hall, and entered the room.

The Baroness de Pers, who was to leave early the next morning, had already retired. Julia played some sonatas as duets with her mother; M. de Lucan played double-dummy with the *curé*; and the evening ended peacefully.

VII.

ON the following morning, Clotilde went with her mother in the carriage which took her to the station. M. de Lucan, who was detained at the chateau by a business appointment, assisted them in their preparations. He noticed the absorbed air of the baroness; contrary to her custom she was silent, and she cast embarrassed looks at him. Several times she approached him, with a constrained smile and an air of secrecy, and then contented herself with a few commonplace words. At last, taking advantage of a moment when Clotilde was giving some orders, she leaned through the portière, and pressing Lucan's hand hard:

"Be an honest man, monsieur," she said.

He saw her eyes moisten at the same time. The carriage left immediately.

The business which then occupied M. de Lucan, and which kept him for a long while during the morning with his advocate and his solicitor, who had arrived from Caen during the night, was an old family lawsuit, which the mayor of Vastville, a troublesome person, greedy of notoriety, had the glory of reviving. He was prosecuting a claim to communal property, the result of which would be to deprive M. de Lucan of a portion of his woods, and to spoil his patrimonial estate. The latter had won the suit in the first instance; but it was to be tried on appeal shortly, and he had misgivings as to the final result.

For some days afterward he had no difficulty in using this as an excuse to the inmates of the chateau to account for a sternness of look, a brevity of language, and a taste for solitude, which possibly concealed even graver troubles. The excuse soon failed him. At the beginning of the following week a telegram informed him that his suit was finally won; and he was therefore obliged to manifest a gladness which was far from his heart.

From that moment he resumed his usual course of life, on which Julia continued to impress every impulse of her active imagination. But he no longer yielded with the same affectionate familiarity to the caprices of his step-daughter. She noticed this, and not she alone. M. de Lucan saw astonishment in the looks of M. de Moras; in those of Clotilde, reproach. A new danger came into view. He did himself injustice in a way which it was alike impossible and dangerous to explain or to leave unexplained.

As the days went by, however, the dreadful suspicion which had

passed through his brain during a recent occurrence became weaker ; it did not strike him with the same force of conviction. He entertained doubts ; he accused himself, at times, of a veritable aberration ; he accused the baroness of cruel and wicked prejudices ; and he finally told himself that, in any case, the wisest plan was to discredit the dramatic episode, and not revive it by taking a serious part in it. Unhappily, Julia's character, full of surprises and of the unexpected, scarcely allowed him to pursue with her a consistent course of conduct.

On a beautiful afternoon, the people of the chateau, accompanied by some neighbors, made an excursion on horseback to the end of Cape la Hogue. While returning, and when about half way back, Julia, who had been remarkably silent the whole day, drew away from the principal group, and casting an expressive glance in the direction of M. de Lucan, urged her horse a little in front. He joined her almost at once. She again launched at him a sidelong glance, and abruptly, and in her bitterest and haughtiest tone, said :

"Is my proximity dangerous to you, monsieur?"

"How—dangerous?" said he, laughing. "I do not understand, my dear lady."

"Why do you avoid me? What have I done? What is the meaning of this new and disagreeable behavior which you have assumed toward me? It is a truly strange thing that the more civil I am, the less so are you. They persecute me for years to make me behave agreeably to you, and when I wear myself out in trying to be so, you look sour? What does that mean? What is passing in your head? I am infinitely curious to know."

"It is quite simple, and I will give it to you in two words. It is passing in my head that, after having been too little amiable with me, you are now almost too much so. I am sincerely touched and charmed by it ; but I am sometimes really afraid to profit too much by attentions to which I have not the sole right. You know how much I love your husband. There can be no question here of jealousy ; understand that perfectly ; but a man's love is proud and sensitive ; and, without degrading himself by feelings unworthy and, moreover, impossible, Pierre, seeing himself somewhat neglected, might get offended, unhappy, and then we should both be miserable ; is it not so?"

"I cannot do anything by halves," said she, with an impatient gesture. "One cannot change her nature. It is with my own heart, not with another's, that I love and that I hate. Besides—why should it not enter into my ideas to make Pierre jealous? Possibly my ancient, legendary hatred of you has made this sage calculation : he might kill you, or me ; and that would be as good a catastrophe as another."

"You will permit me to much prefer another," said Lucan, trying always, but without much success, to give a playful turn to this lurid conversation.

"Besides," continued she, "don't disturb yourself, my dear monsieur. Pierre is not jealous. He suspects nothing, as they say in the vaudevilles."

She gave one of her disagreeable laughs, and immediately resumed a serious tone :

"And what should he suspect? If I am civil to you, that is by orders; and no one can know to what point I carry mine."

"I am convinced that you don't know, yourself," said he, laughing. "Your temperament is by nature tempestuous. You must have a storm, and when there is none, you will make one. It is not really a very tragic matter that you love or do not love your stepfather. There is room here for only very simple and very ordinary feelings. So it is necessary to complicate them a little—is it not so, my dear?"

"Yes—my dear!" said she, with an ironical inflection on the last word.

Then she urged her horse to a galop.

By this time they had reached the border of the woods. He saw that she soon left the direct road which they were going, and took a path across the heath, as if to plunge into the midst of the forest. At the same moment Clotilde hastened to his side, and touching his shoulder with the end of her whip :

"Where is Julia going?" said she, excitedly.

Lucan replied with a meaningless gesture and a smile.

"I am sure," continued Clotilde, "that she has gone to drink at the spring down there. She complained just now of being thirsty. Go after her, my dear, and hurry. She is so heated! It may be the death of her. Hasten, I beseech you!"

M. de Lucan gave the horse his head, and went off like the wind. Julia had already disappeared under cover of the wood. He followed her tracks, but inside the forest the roots and the slope of the ground somewhat checked his speed. At some distance, in a narrow glade, the percolation from the soil had, by the work of centuries, hollowed out one of those mysterious springs, whose limpid water, moss-covered sides, and air of perfect solitude enchant the imagination, and give rise to so many poetic legends. When Lucan caught sight of Julia through the trees, she had dismounted. A couple of paces off, her horse was standing, beautifully erect, browsing the leaves; while his mistress, on her knees, and leaning over the edge of the spring, was drinking out of her hands.

"Julia, I beg of you!" said M. de Lucan, raising his voice.

She rose with a sort of light bound, and saluted him gaily :

"Too late, monsieur!" said she; "but I have drunk only a few drops—only a few little drops, I swear to you."

"You are very foolish!" said Lucan, who was then quite close to her.

"Do you think so?"

She shook her white, superb hands, which had served her for a cup, and which seemed to drop diamonds.

"Give me your handkerchief!"

Lucan gave her his handkerchief. She wiped her hands demurely, then, returning his handkerchief with her right hand, she raised herself slightly on tiptoe, and held out her left hand to him on a level with his face.

"There! don't sulk any more!"

Lucan kissed the hand.

"The other, now," she continued. "Don't turn pale, my dear!"

M. de Lucan pretended not to hear the last words, and got off his horse abruptly.

"I must help you to remount," said he, in a dry, harsh voice.

With head bent she put on her gloves. Then, lifting her head suddenly, and looking at him fixedly:

"What a worthless wretch I am become, am I-not?" said she.

"No," said Lucan, **"but what an unhappy one!"**

She leaned against one of the trees which shaded the spring, her head partly thrown back, and one hand over her eyes.

"Come," said Lucan.

She obeyed, and he assisted her to remount. They went out of the wood without speaking, regained the road, and soon rejoined the party.

Under the immediate stress of the anguish of this scene M. de Lucan fully believed that the departure of Julia and her husband would be a necessary and immediate consequence; but, when he began to seek for means to bring about their speedy return to Paris, his mind lost itself in insoluble difficulties. How, indeed, could he justify, in the eyes of Clotilde and M. de Moras, so strange and unexpected a resolution? It was now the middle of August, and it had been long understood that the whole family should return to Paris on the first of September. The near approach of the time fixed for the general departure would, of itself, lend greater improbability to any pretext which he might give to explain the proposed sudden separation. It was almost impossible that it would not give rise, in the minds of Clotilde and the count, to irreparable suspicions, and an enlightenment which would prove mortal to the happiness of both. The remedy was truly more desperate than the disease itself; for, if the disease was desperate, it was at least unknown to those whose hearts it would break, and whose lives it would ruin; and there was always hope that it might remain so forever. M. de Lucan thought for a moment of going away himself; but it was even more impossible to assign a motive for his own departure than for that of Julia.

Having made these reflections, he resolved to arm himself with patience and courage. Once in Paris, their separate establishments, their less frequent meetings, their social duties, and the stir of life would speedily relieve, and then quietly resolve, the unhappy and threatening situation from which he had hitherto been unable to extricate himself. He reckoned upon himself, and also upon the instinctive good-feeling of Julia, to reach, without disturbance and

without heartbreak, the approaching change, which would put an end to their life in common and to these ever-present perils. It ought not to be impossible to exorcise, during the brief period of fifteen days, the outbreak of the storm which for several months had been rumbling, but without discharging its lightnings. He forgot with what appalling swiftness the diseases of the soul, no less than those of the body, after having slowly and gradually reached a fatal crisis, suddenly precipitate their progress and their ravages.

M. de Lucan asked himself whether he ought to inform Julia of the conduct which he had decided upon, and of the reasons which dictated it; but every hint of explanation between them seemed to him supremely unbecoming and dangerous. Their mutual knowledge on such a subject had assumed an appearance of complicity which was repugnant to all his sentiments of honor. But, notwithstanding the terrible revelations which had been made, there still remained between them something obscure, indecisive, unavowed, which he thought he ought to preserve at all risks. Accordingly, from this moment, so far from seeking opportunities for some private conversation, he avoided them with scrupulous care. Julia seemed possessed with the same reserve, and equally determined to avoid a tête-à-tête, saving appearances; but, in this respect, the young woman had not the same capacity for dissimulation which Lucan owed to his natural and acquired firmness. As for him, he could, without visible effort, conceal beneath his habitual aspect of gravity the anxieties which devoured him. But Julia was unable, without an almost hysterical constraint, to bear, with a proud and smiling face, the burden of her thought. For the only witness who was in the secret of these struggles, it was a pitiful spectacle—that of the gracious but feverish animation, the pretence of which this unhappy child painfully kept up. At times he would see her at a distance, like some tired-out actress, alone on some retired seat in the garden, panting, her hand upon her breast, as though to keep down her rebellious heart. And then, in spite of all, in the presence of so much beauty and so much misery, he was overcome with a profound pity.

Was there nothing else than pity?

At the same time the demeanor, the words, the looks of Clotilde and of Julia's husband were for M. de Lucan the objects of constant and uneasy watchfulness. Clotilde evidently felt not the least alarm. The sweet serenity of her features remained undisturbed. A few vagaries more or less in Julia's conduct were not so novel a thing as to call for particular notice. Her thoughts, moreover, were too far away from the monstrous abyss yawning beside her; she had stepped over the edge and was engulfed in it before she had so much as suspected its existence.

The fair features, calm and handsome, of the Count de Moras, like the dark face of de Lucan, preserved at all times a sort of sculpturesque firmness. It was difficult enough, then, to read there the impressions of a soul which was naturally strong and very much

master of itself. On one point, however, this soul had become weak. M. de Lucan was aware of this ; he knew of the count's ardent love for Julia, and the morbid susceptibility of his passion. It was unlikely that such a feeling, if it were rendered really suspicious, would not betray itself by some violent or, at least, noticeable external sign. But M. de Lucan observed none of these dreaded symptoms. Moreover, even if he should surprise at moments a fleeting crease in the brow, a doubtful intonation, a stolen glance, or an absent look, he could set it down to some return of that vague, chimerical jealousy with which he knew that the count had long been tormented. He also saw him preserve in the family circle the same smiling impassibility, and he continued to receive from him the same evidences of cordiality. Beset, nevertheless, by his proper scruples of loyalty and friendship, he had a mad temptation to make the count a confidant of the ordeal which was imposed on them ; but, while relieving his own heart, this confidence, so delicate and so cruel, would it not drive to despair the heart of his friend ? And, moreover, this pretended act of loyalty, betraying the secret of a woman, would it not be a double baseness and treason ?

In the midst of all these perils and miseries, then, he was obliged to support, alone and until the end, the weight of this trial, even more complicated and more dangerous, perhaps, than he himself was willing to confess.

The end was nearer than he anticipated.

One day, Clotilde and her husband, and M. and Madame de Moras, went in the carriage to visit the ruins of a covered gallery, one of the remarkable Druidical antiquities of the country. These remains were at the head of a picturesque cove hollowed out of the face of the rocky wall which extends along the east side of the peninsula. Their shapeless masses were strewn over the surface of one of those grassy mounds which jut here and there like huge buttresses from the foot of the cliffs. In spite of the steepness of the descent, the ruins were accessible by an easy road, which descended with long windings to the yellow sand of the little bay. While the men smoked, Clotilde and Julia made a sketch of the old Celtic temple ; then they amused themselves for a time by watching the rising sea spread its fringes of foam over the sand. In order to relieve the horses, it was decided to reascend the cliff on foot. At a sign from Lucan the carriage went on ; Clotilde took M. de Moras' arm, and the two began to slowly clamber up the winding road. Lucan was awaiting Julia's pleasure to follow them ; she had stopped a short distance back, and was engaged in an animated conversation with an old fisherman, who was finishing spreading his bait in a hollow in the rocks.

Turning toward Lucan, she raised her voice a little :

"He says there is a very easy and much shorter road close by, along the cliff. I have a mind to take it, so as to avoid the tiresome ascent."

"There is nothing in it, believe me," said Lucan ; "a road which

would be quite easy for country-folks might be a good deal less so for you."

After another colloquy with her fisherman :

"He says," replied Julia, "there is really no danger, and that the children go up and come down by it all the time. He will take me to the foot of the path, and I shall have nothing more to do than to go up straight ahead. Tell my mother that I shall be at the top before you."

"Your mother will die of uneasiness."

"Tell her there is no danger."

Lucan, giving up any more opposition to a will which was getting impatient, went to the servant who was carrying Julia's shawls and album, and told him to reassure Clotilde and M. de Moras, who had already disappeared in the windings of the road ; then, turning to Julia :

"When you are ready," said he.

"You are going with me?"

"Naturally."

The old fisherman went on ahead, following the base of the cliffs. After leaving the sandy bay, the shore was encumbered with huge fragments of rock, with sharp ridges, which made the walking very difficult. Although the distance was short, they were already tired out by the time they reached the foot of the path, which seemed to Lucan, and possibly also to Julia herself, far less safe and easy than the fisherman had made out. Neither, however, cared to make any objection. After some final instructions their old guide left, very well satisfied with Lucan's liberality. Thereupon, both commenced resolutely to scale the cliff, which, known here by the name of Jobourg Hill, overlooks the ocean from a height of three hundred feet. At the beginning of their ascent they broke the silence which they had hitherto maintained by exchanging, in a humorous tone, some brief remarks as to the charms of this goat-walk ; but the real, not to say alarming, difficulties of the way, speedily absorbed all their attention. The slightly worn track disappeared for a moment over the naked rock, or hidden beneath some landslide ; and they had some difficulty in recovering the lost clue. Their feet slipped on the smooth surface of the rock, or on the close, smooth grass. At times they were at the edge of an almost perpendicular precipice, and when they stopped to take breath, the magnificent outlook under their eyes, the vast distances, the metallic sheen of the ocean, gave them a dizzy, swimming sensation. Although the sky was low and overcast, a heavy, ominous heat oppressed them, and made their blood move faster. Lucan went on ahead with feverish determination, turning round from time to time to throw a glance at Julia, who followed close, then raising his head to look for some level spot where they could breathe for a moment in safety. Above and below him was the cliff, perpendicular, sometimes overhanging.

All at once Julia called to him in a tone of agony :

"Monsieur! monsieur! oh, please! my head swims."

He quickly redescended a few steps, at the risk of rolling down, and, seizing her hand forcibly:

"Come, come," said he, smiling; "what is the matter? A brave creature like you!"

"One ought to have wings!" said she, feebly.

Lucan immediately began again to ascend the path, supporting and half dragging Julia, who was almost faint.

At last he had the satisfaction of setting foot on a projection of ground, a sort of narrow esplanade along the face of the cliff. With an effort he drew up Julia, all panting. Her head drooped and settled itself on Lucan's breast. He heard her arteries and her heart beating with terrible violence. Gradually her agitation subsided. She slowly raised her head, partially opened her long lashes, and, looking at him with an intoxicated gaze:

"I am so happy!" she murmured; "I should like to die here."

Lucan thrust her from him roughly to the length of his arm; then, suddenly seizing her again, and embracing her madly with a terrible gesture, he cast one awful look at her, and another at the abyss. She surely believed they were going to perish together. Her lips paled slightly; then smiled; and, half turning her head:

"With you?" said she; "what joy!"

At the same instant the sound of voices was heard a short distance above them. Lucan recognized those of Clotilde and the count. His arm suddenly relaxed, and removed itself from around Julia. Without speaking, but with an imperious gesture, he showed her the path which curved around the rock.

"Without you, then!" she said, with a sweet, proud accent.

Then she followed him.

Two minutes later they were on the top of the cliff, telling Clotilde of the perils of their ascent, which sufficiently accounted for their visible discomposure. They thought so, at least.

In the evening, after dinner, Julia, M. de Moras, and Clotilde took a walk under the yoke-els in the garden. M. de Lucan, after keeping them company for some time, left them, with the excuse that he had some letters to write. He remained for only a few moments in his library, where the voices from the garden caught his ear, and agitated his soul. The wish for absolute solitude, for meditation, perhaps also some strange and unavowed sentiment, led him to the Ladies' walk, stamped for him with an ineffaceable remembrance. There, for a long time and with slow steps, he paced, in the profound darkness in which nightfall had immersed it. He wished to take counsel of his soul, to talk with it face to face, to sound his feelings to their very depths. What he there discovered terrified him. It was a mad intoxication, exalted by the suspicion of crime. Duty, loyalty, honor, everything which opposed itself as an obstacle to his passion, only exasperated its violence. The pagan Venus had bitten his heart, and turned his blood to poison. The image of that fatal

beauty was there, inexorable, in his burning brain, before his distracted vision. In spite of himself he greedily inhaled its languors, its perfume, its breath.

The sound of a light step on the sand made him stop. Through the obscurity he saw a white figure approach.

It was she.

By a hardly conscious movement, he threw himself into the dark angle of one of the massive columns which supported the ruins at the back of the wood. A mass of foliage increased the darkness there. She came on, her head bent, and with her usual supple, rhythmical motion. She went to the small pool which received the waters of the stream, meditated for a few minutes on its edge, then returned. A second time she passed by the ruin without raising her eyes, as though profoundly absorbed. Lucan was convinced that she had no suspicion of his presence, when, all of a sudden, and without interrupting her walk, she turned her head slightly, and flung behind her the one word: "Adieu!" in a tone so soft, so sweet, so mournful, that one would have thought a tear had fallen on a musical crystal.

It was a supreme moment. It was one of those moments when the fate of a man is decided for weal or for woe through all eternity. M. de Lucan knew it. If he yielded to the attraction of passion, of vertigo, of pity, which, with a violence almost irresistible, urged him toward this beautiful and unhappy woman—who was ready to fall at his feet, on his heart—he knew that his was a soul forever lost and despairing. This crime, though it should remain hidden from all, would forever separate him from everything that he had hitherto held in respect, as sacred and inviolable; of these, there would remain to him nothing more, either on earth or in heaven; there would be no longer faith, or goodness, or honor, or friend, or—God! In that one moment the moral universe would vanish.

He accepted the "Adieu," but he did not answer it. The white figure sped away, and was soon lost in the darkness.

In the family circle the evening passed away as usual. Julia, pale, anxious, and haughty, worked at her tapestry in silence. Lucan noticed that, on retiring, she kissed her mother with unusual fervor.

It was not long before he, himself, retired. Assailed by the most dreadful fears, he did not lie down. Toward morning, only, he threw himself on his bed. It was about five o'clock, and the dawn had hardly broken, when he thought he heard some one walk cautiously along the corridor and down the staircase. He arose. The windows of his room opened on the court. He saw Julia cross it, dressed in a riding-habit. She went into the stables, and came out again a few minutes later. A servant led her horse to her, and helped her to mount. This man, dressed in the slightly eccentric costume devised by herself, appeared to see nothing alarming in this whim of a morning ride.

After some minutes of anxious thought, M. de Lucan came to a decision. He directed his steps toward the room of the Count de

Moras. To his extreme astonishment he found him up and dressed. On seeing Lucan enter, the count was struck with amazement. He fixed upon him a penetrating and manifestly troubled gaze.

"What is it, then?" said he, at last, in a low, broken voice.

"Nothing serious, I hope," replied Lucan. "Nevertheless, I am uneasy. Julia has gone out on horseback. As you are up, you have no doubt seen and heard her, as well as myself."

"Yes," said Moras, who had continued to gaze at Lucan with an expression of unutterable stupefaction; "yes," he repeated, recovering himself with difficulty, "and I am truly glad—very glad to see you, my dear friend."

While uttering these simple words, de Moras' voice was embarrassed; a veil of moisture passed over his eyes.

"Where can she have gone at this hour?" he continued, with his usual firmness of voice.

"I don't know; some new fancy, I suppose. But she has seemed to me to have been unusually strange and gloomy for some time. We will try to follow her, if you wish."

"Let us go, my friend," said the count, coldly, after a pause of strange hesitation.

They left the chateau, carrying their fowling-pieces, so as to make it appear as though, following a frequent enough custom, they were going to shoot some sea-birds. When it came to selecting a route, M. de Moras looked at Lucan inquiringly.

"The only danger that occurs to me is from the cliffs. Some words which escaped her yesterday make me fear that the peril lies there; but, being on horseback, she will have to make a long circuit. By going through the woods, we can get there before her."

They plunged into the forest to the west of the chateau, and pushed on silently and swiftly. The road led them directly out on the top of the cliffs which they had visited the day before. On this side, the woods projected into an irregular point, the farthest trees of which almost touched the very edge of the precipice. As, while feverishly hastening their pace, they approached this extreme verge, Lucan suddenly stopped:

"Listen!" said he.

The sound of a horse's gallop on the hard soil was distinctly heard. They galoped ahead.

A low ridge separated the wood from the top of the cliff. This they surmounted at half-speed, helping themselves along by the aid of the hanging branches. Then, while themselves hidden by the underbrush and the foliage, a harrowing spectacle presented itself to their gaze. At a short distance to their left Julia was coming, in a mad galop, along the oblique border of the wood, apparently making a straight line for the edge of the precipice. They believed, at first, that the horse had run away with her, but they saw that she was lashing its sides in order to increase its speed still further.

She was then about a hundred yards from the two men, and would

soon pass them. Lucan sprang forward in order to get to the other side of the ridge, when M. de Moras' hand clutched his arm violently, and kept him back. They looked at each other. Lucan was confounded by the startling change which had suddenly contracted the count's features, and hollowed his eyes. In his fixed gaze Lucan read, at one and the same moment, an unfathomable grief and an inexorable resolution. He understood that there was no longer any secret between them. He obeyed the look ; which, moreover, had for him only an expression of trust and friendly supplication. He grasped with rigid hand the hand of his friend, and remained motionless. The horse sped by at a few paces distance like an arrow, his breast covered with foam ; whilst Julia, beautiful, graceful, and charming even at this terrible moment, sat lightly in her saddle.

A few feet from the edge of the cliff the horse, becoming aware of the precipice, abruptly shied and turned half round. She rode back, took up position, and urging him with whip and voice, launched him once more toward the dreadful abyss. The animal again refusing the formidable obstacle, the young woman, with hair loosened, eyes flashing, and nostrils distended, turned him round, and forced him to back step by step to the brink of the precipice. The horse, smoking, rearing, raised himself almost erect, projecting his full height against the gray morning sky.

Lucan felt the nails of M. de Moras digging into his flesh.

Then the horse was conquered ; his hind legs left the firm earth, and encountered—space. He turned over ; his fore-feet beat the air convulsively.

An instant later the cliff was void. There was no sound. In the deep abyss, the fall and the death had been alike silent.

THE END.

L'AMOUR DES FEMMES

By J. C. PARK

IN the extreme northeast of France, almost on the border line, is an isolated village which time has forgotten in its onrush, leaving unmolested a scrap of centuries ago to wander down through today. There, until recently, lived one Jean Carageat—who was not French—his daughter Vera—who was not Russian—and his wife, the daughter of a Paris shopkeeper of the good sort, which in Paris is as much better than the average good sort at large as the bad sort is worse.

The Carageats lived always apart from the peasants, always alone except for one visitor. At odd intervals, and often without warning, there came to them a beautiful woman, for whom Vera was named and whom she worshiped as the ideal goddess of her realm of dreams. She did not know, then, that they lived in the lonely village simply to keep always ready there a midway hiding and resting place for Vera Filipava, one of the most beautiful and adored of Parisian women, alias Vera Figner, known in St. Petersburg as the most feared of all the secret foes of Russia, the arch-Nihilist, the soul and center of every political intrigue of her day. Very few, indeed, anywhere knew then that the two were one.

Beautiful presents the beautiful Filipava brought to her little namesake, and wonderful tales she told of wonderful Paris to the Vera nestling in her arms. And whatever she was to Paris or Petersburg, she was the gentlest, dearest and the sweetest of all sweet dreams to Vera Carageat.

It was only after the visits had long ceased that, from fragments of conversation between her parents, Vera

put together the sad story of her beloved Filipava and knew that, wonderful as she was, she was still a woman and must love; and that of all who loved her she must love one whom she could not marry and one who lived in the place of all places where it was most dangerous for her to go. But again and again, till once too often, she braved the dangers, entering the very inner circles of the mighty in Petersburg, because she loved him so.

At last the police were waiting for her and the end was Siberia. No, even Siberia was not the end. For, because her beauty and gentleness were still bribes by which she succeeded in communicating with her friends, she was consigned to a dungeon in the awful prison in the fortress of Peter and Paul, and for fifteen years she neither saw a human form nor heard a human voice except her own. And even that was not the end. The Government announced that she was released; but Vera Figner, bent and helpless, deaf and nearly blind, white-haired and toothless, mentally and physically a hopeless wreck, was only taken from the dungeon to make room for fresh ones; taken to an unnamed settlement beyond the Arctic Circle, where she was left by order of the Government to live or die according to the mercy of the half-civilized inhabitants. The end will come only when heaven helps the poor Filipava by ordering her real release.

The impression which was left upon the little Vera's mind was deep, and it grew with her until it filled her. The love of her idol she idealized. The Nihilism she hated. One was her crown

of glory. The other was the scorpion that killed.

"If ever I love a man," she said to herself a hundred times, "I will be everything to him that can help him, and I'll be nothing, nothing at all, to anyone else."

There was no one in the little village for her to love, but the dream thought grew till it became the only idea of her life-to-be. And when, long after the sometimes guest was gone, and Jean Carageat himself reentered active service, was recognized in Russia as Ivan Koursoff and his face, too, was turned toward Siberia, Vera's mother remembered that she was a Parisian, and drifted back again, and Vera took her dream to the beautiful Filipava's realm.

Her mother opened a flower booth, as the readiest means to a livelihood, for all Paris lives on flowers. From the narrow Way of Life, with its solemn minuet in the throb of the Bourdon Bell by Esmeralda's dungeon, to the Broad Way for the Dance of Death, with its voluptuous revelry, every path of Paris is garlanded and every breast is boutonnièred.

Vera was sixteen and everything helped her to be helpful. She was pretty and fresh from the fields, like the flowers, and kind and good because her idol was so kind and good and she knew of nothing else worth emulation. She was happy, too, to be in Paris, where the beautiful Filipava once lived and where all her dreams centered. Each morning she took from the booth a basket of pretty *boutonnieres* and walked down the Avenue des Acacias, to catch the legislators out for an early airing, then past the beauty shops on the Place Vendome, for the lovely women fresh from the massage, and along the Rue Castiglione, for the dwellers in the fashionable hotels, and under the arches of the Rue de Rivoli, for the *boulevardiers* seeking exercise in the shade, and on to the Latin Quarter, to sell to students, at a discount, whatever might be left. And nothing was surer than what happened, that she started with more and more flowers in

her basket and sold them at higher and higher prices. With many it was not so much the *boutonniere* as the seller of which they thought. For pretty little Vera was a pearl of price. Paris always sets a market value upon such pearls and many a one, through the flowers, sought to purchase the pearl. But Vera went her way with a smile for everyone and nothing more for anyone.

Oh, but that smile, that smile! Was anything ever so bewildering! It was never meant to be, for Vera knew no more that she was beautiful than the flowers knew how pretty they were. When her eyes drooped and laughed and her lips parted and her teeth sparkled in the sunshine, with dimples set in roses on her cheeks, and soft, dark eyebrows, clinging and drooping about her eyes, to keep the sun from mischief there while they were laughing, she had not a bit better idea how utterly ravishing she was than had the buds, half opened, dripping with the tiny drops which she sprayed over them when she put them in the basket. She only felt that when a man paid her three or four times the price of a flower and said sweet things to her as she pinned it on his coat, it was the proper thing to thank him, and she bobbed her pretty face and smiled distractingly, and went her way. It was the same for rich or poor, for anyone who was kind to her—and who could help being kind to Vera? But there was something about it so fresh and spontaneous, like the songs the birds sing to the sunrise, that we all thought it came for us alone, and as she went her way she left us each heart-throbbing, sure that the next day, or the next, there would be something more than smiles. Perhaps there was a touch of jealousy in it, which made me watch the way she went and take it more to heart.

In the Latin Quarter there lived a young artist fellow from the South, named Maglione—and a good name it was for him. He was broad and tall and strong, dark as an Italian, graceful as a Greek. He had no end of blue-

black hair and his eyebrows were heavy and black. The black lashes curled under them as though singed by the deep, sullen fires that smoldered in the large, dark eyes. His upper lip would sometimes lift its soft, black mustache from the perfect teeth of Southern France when he was angry—he was very often angry—and when he smiled. I think he never smiled except on Vera.

I knew him rather well in those days and better later, for I was one of the very few who liked him. I liked him because he was so ferociously somber—except when he smiled on Vera. He was distinctly a dreamer. He dreamed more than he felt. He felt more than he thought. He thought more than he put upon canvas. So that while the visions in which he really lived were marvels, his productions, upon which he must exist, hardly better than kept him alive. There was always something in his work which seemed touching finger tips with inspiration. But there was always so much besides that was execrable. When we were not afraid of rousing that phenomenal wrath of his, which showed his white teeth and curled his eyelashes with up-flashes of the latent fires, we used to laugh at his work and say that the reason he signed it—which he did with a dreamer's mysterious cipher—was to let the purchaser know which was the bottom of the picture. But poor as he was, he was always immaculate in his dress. It was neither loud nor ostentatious, but never, with a single exception, did I see the man when he was not properly and precisely clad.

Maglione the Magnificent we called him; a gloomy, grand lion. He was a figure painter in ideal embryo, but he was so poor that he could not even indulge to the rarest occasional degree in the figure painter's dire necessity—a worthy model. At the schools, when he could afford the pittance, he painted from the life; but live models, standing in set poses for rooms full of nondescript students are not inspirations to dreamers. So Maglione grumbled and growled and shook his fist in the face of the

imaginary destiny that prevented him from developing what was in him by depriving him of the necessary possibilities.

It was then that out of nothing he fell into the way of giving what he had—a sou—to Vera for one of her leftovers. Heaven only knows the hows and whys of such things, but in no long time it came to pass that every morning Maglione was walking slowly up the Rue de Rivoli and Vera was walking slowly down at the same time; and that just as she received double and treble for her flowers from some, she was giving him double and treble for his sou, hiding the best from the booth in the straw at the bottom of her basket, to slip it out when she saw him coming. And that was not all, for as the hearts of others throbbed when Vera smiled, her little heart felt strange tuggings at its strings when Maglione's white teeth showed under his black mustache.

They never seemed to say much to each other. Maglione seldom spoke to anyone except when he was angry. Yet it came about in some way that when they met and the sou was in Vera's basket and the *boutonnière* from under the straw was pinned on Maglione's coat, he turned and walked back with her through the Quarter as far as the wretched stairs which led to his attic studio. By and by Vera even climbed the stairs with him, to put the little room in order and leave in a broken mug whatever of flowers were unsold in her basket.

Sweet, little, laughing Vera was so very good that her whole soul thrilled with joy in the thought that she was being really helpful, at last, helpful in making something in the world brighter and better, even if it was only one miserable little room up under the tiles. And happiest of all was Vera that her helpfulness was for such a great, grand man, bringing softness, if not sunshine, into those cloud-shadowed eyes and parting those sad lips with smiles. She believed she was the happiest girl in France, and I think she was.

As for Maglione, I sometimes wondered whether he knew that Vera was a

living thing, at all—anything more than a part of his dreams. He certainly never cared a straw whether the dust lay deep or disappeared, whether his bed was ever better made than he made it, whether things were in one place or another, whether the broken mug had flowers—but yes. He was an artist. He loved the beautiful. He must have loved flowers to have begun paying a sou for them. And Vera was beautiful—beautifully beautiful—a flower of flowers. I wonder if he ever loved Vera? Dear, little, laughing Vera!

One day a thought, between dreams, dawned on Maglione, much as it must have dawned on him to spend a sou for the first flower—and from that he fell into the way of it. The thought dawned on him one day when Vera had been washing some soiled thing in the studio, with her sleeves rolled up to the shoulders, the way she had seen the village washerwomen. Maglione sat moodily smoking a cigarette. The drooping lids were so nearly closed over his black eyes that only a narrow glint betrayed the fact that he was still awake. I have seen him sit that way an evening through, hardly civil enough to rouse himself and say good night—simply dreaming. Vera shook out the cloth, and reaching up as high as possible, she pinned it to the window shade, where it could hang in the sun and dry. Without moving, Maglione said:

“Your arms are beautiful, so. Hold them there till I sketch them.”

Vera's heart gave a great throb and she held her arms that way, hard as it was, till Maglione had made several sketches. In spite of the pain her eyes were laughing and her cheeks were dimples all the time, because she was really helping—helping the man whom she did not know she loved.

When the idea once dawned on Maglione, it was like the idea of the sou and the flowers—it grew. And Vera was so generous and good that it filled her with the purest joy to see how much it meant to him to have her pose for a little while each noon. To save more time for it she began earlier in the morning and walked faster, without

loitering about the beauty shops or at the doors of waiting carriages on the Rue Castiglione, and to atone for it she ran all the way back to the booth from the Quarter, so that her mother should not suspect. It was not that her conscience troubled her. Her heart throbbed with a joy too high and too holy for that. It was only that she knew, instinctively, as everyone knows who really loves—whether they know that they love or not—that another, even a mother, could not possibly understand. And no more could they. No more ever can they. No more ever will they. It is the deferring to others, in imagination or reality, matters which they must see from another side, questions which they can only answer upon ice-bound theories and heartless tenets, which turns the day to night and life to death for a hundred where it saves one soul from the bonds of iniquity, to plunge it, instead, into the gall of bitterness.

So the idea which dawned upon Maglione grew. And the better he looked the better he saw how regally beautiful the laughing Vera was, till he had realized his dreams and filled his sketch slips, so far as heads and necks and arms and draperies could help. But by that time the fires of genius were blazing and his soul burned for the curves and contours, the lights and shadows, the glow of life, the flesh tints, the reality of all the beautiful rest. Maglione had no diplomacy or sophistry, but Vera needed none. Only to know his wishes and respond gave her such joy that little by little she gave him all. She gave him everything and was happy as a bird that sings to sunshine, because she loved him so.

She thought—of course she thought that he loved her. And possibly he did. Who am I that I should hunt for motives in brother artists' eyes? At any rate, it is but the fair truth to say for Maglione that he never tried to deceive Vera; and never for an instant did she think he had. If she mistook the depth of the meaning in the parted lips and lightened eyes, and later the flushed cheeks, the tender touch and warm

caress, growing as everything grew with Maglione, into strong arms drawing her very soul so close to his, if Vera mistook all this for love— No, no, Vera was not mistaken. Maglione must have loved her. He loved the beautiful. Only he loved art, his art, so much more than that, except when he drifted out of dreams for a moment and became a man, it never occurred to him that anything, even Vera, was more than a part of them and Art. And Vera was so happy to be even a part of the dreams and the Art that her laughing, loving self was more and more absorbed till it was all engulfed, enveloped in the dream, the love, the Art—whichever was uppermost.

The happiest moment she had known—happier even than when the beautiful Filipava held her in her arms and told her of beautiful Paris—was up in the little attic when Maglione held her in his arms and told her a more wonderful tale of a great dream he was dreaming, of a grand masterpiece, a Goddess of Something, wrapped in clouds and her beautiful hair. It should go to the Salon. It should take the world by storm. It should set him on a pinnacle of fame and sell for a fortune, and poverty and privation would fly away. Vera had thought so much of Maglione that she had taken the poverty and privation only as a part of the joy; but the dream tale filled her with rapture because he told her that she was to be the model; that without her help he could not accomplish it. She ran back to the booth that day on feet that felt no pavement, for they touched only the silver clouds of the real, as Maglione would have them in his ideal. All the time she whispered to herself of the monarch it would make of Maglione, and of her supernal lot to be the necessary thing that was to help him to his throne.

So little by little the shielding draperies prescribed by social ethics fell away for study after study leading up to the grand design, when it should finally take shape. And if ever a figure painter really improved in strides phenomenal it was Maglione. Genius

crept from his heart to his brain and from his brain to his brush. More than once we critics of his previous work were cast into confusion by marvelous bits which he showed—a hand or a foot, a leg, an arm, a shoulder quivering with life—as the result of a noon hour of study from the real.

Better than he knew—better than he stopped to consider, at any rate—Maglione builded, away from the easel, an altar to the God of Love; and Vera was so happy to be for him the model, upon either altar, that neither did she stop to consider. She lived without a thought of anything except that she was helping him and making him happier, because she loved him so. She lived in that dearest of all deliriums, when the warp and woof of every heart throb means the best that is in one for one's better self.

Maglione had not deceived her. Vera knew that away in the South of France there was a woman living upon a small estate which he had inherited and which he had left to her when he fled to Paris—fled because there was nothing in common between them; nothing but the law of man that whom God hath joined, through the advocacy of the Church, no one shall put asunder. She knew all about it, and how he had come empty-handed to Paris to fight for the glory of the genius which he felt was in him. She knew and she adored him for it, and more than ever was happy that she was helping him where the other failed and making him happier on the way. Sometimes a thought of the nearing future would force itself between the exultant throbs of joy, but so little did it penetrate that the shock was like a thunderbolt from pink-tinted mists when mother eyes could not be any longer blind and turned upon the happy flower girl with all the proverbial wrath of the good sort, and the mother lips told her never again to cross her path unless she came to her with a marriage certificate in her hand, as a passport to the mother love which is ideally inalienable.

Then there came one bitter hour for the laughing Vera—the hour when she

returned to Maglione to tell him of her distress and found him so engrossed over a potboiler that he seemed hardly to know that she was speaking, much less what she was saying. Bursting into tears at last, she turned toward the door trying to sob good-bye, when he looked up and said:

"If your mother doesn't want you, why don't you come here? The room back of this is vacant. We can get it for a song. These things are selling better now. I can pay for it and you can cook our meals and save that way. It will give you time to amount to something in posing."

"Can I?" trembled on her quivering lips between a smile and tears.

"Of course you can, silly," he replied. "Now run back to mamma and get your things and say good-bye till she's ready to forgive. As soon as it's too dark to paint we'll go out and fix up about the room."

Maglione was painting again, trying to realize something on a small canvas; but the tears on Vera's lashes were turned to rainbows by the laughing eyes behind them, and the tears on her cheeks were lost in dimples as she hurried away happier than ever. Why not? Was not Vera Filipava her idol and mentor in all but the fatal blunder of not giving all, everything, to the one man she loved? And sometimes, in the weeks which followed, we really thought them ideally happy, those two so unsophisticated Babes in the Woods in Bohemia.

No mortal ever changed as Maglione changed. He was a dreamer still, but he dreamed dreams which brought a new light to his dark eyes. His lips were less sullenly closed. He painted better, sold more and talked. We believed that love had transformed him, *if* he really loved. And we worshiped the laughing Vera, not as the Goddess of Something, for the Salon and fame and fortune, but as the Queen of Sunshine who had worked the miracle.

In the first flush of the new life the great dream was almost forgotten. It was too large and absorbing a concep-

tion to intrude just then. Besides, Maglione was doing beautiful work in little potboilers in the nude; and it was such a luxury to have a few of the luxuries of life, together with Vera's love, that there's little wonder he forgot. It was Vera herself who called him back, shortly after the baby was born. And the moody fellow, always so erratic, was no sooner coaxed again to dream that dream than he forthwith forgot every other and even Vera.

Potboilers ceased altogether, and little by little the luxuries left them and the necessities followed. In utter oblivion Maglione dreamed on. Vera could no longer go out on the street and sell flowers when she must be at home all day to cook and sew and pose and nurse the baby, but she thought of other ways to help—only, always, to help. It was her one ambition from her earliest thoughts of the life-to-be, away in the little village. She thought of the evenings, the evenings that for the first while had been such ineffable hours to her; the evenings when she could leave the dreamer dreaming by the cradle. And if a poignant flash brought out the handwriting on the wall for her at the readiness with which Maglione consented to forego their evenings, Vera's generous heart concealed it.

In their brief days of luxury Paul Delmet had sometimes been their guest for a Sunday-night supper, the good Paul Delmet, who died a year later—heaven rest his ashes and his soul! He had praised her singing and laughed when she sang the merry village songs of the North. Well he might, for like all else of Vera there was sunshine in her singing. So she went to Paul Delmet in her distress—as hundreds of others went to him—and he helped her as he helped so many, so many who stood in need. Aye, if in the measure that ye mete, withal—mete to the least of these—it shall be measured to you again, then wherever thou art today, Paul Delmet, the friend of the friendless of Paris, they are dealing into thy bosom good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. For thou didst even so to them.

Paul Delmet had seen many a hard bit of uphill in his day, but at that time he was at the zenith of his success—the position where so many cease from troubling about the poor they have left behind. He was the last of the merrymaking song specialists of Montmartre, singing his own songs at the street corners first, and selling copies for two sous to whoever would buy. His “Stances de Manon” had made him the rage in Paris. His “Vieux Mendiant” was capturing the world. The homely, big-hearted, little-bodied, awfully jolly, frightfully near-sighted man! What a flood of happiness he set adrift in one way and another through the length and breadth of the high and low of Paris! With his violin and his songs he had crept up from the street corners to become king of the *cabaret* when Vera appealed to him. He taught her his merriest songs—his laughing songs—and she sang into them more than he had ever dreamed was there and made him greater even while he was making her.

He took her to the *cabaret* on the Rue Victor Massé, and every night it was crowded with the *haute société*. Great ladies of Napoleonic families and men whose word was law upon the Bourse were there to smile and roar over the laughing Vera singing Delmet's laughing songs. The gay pranciers of the Rue de la Paix were there. They had quite forgotten the little flower girl and turned ravenously to this beautiful new star, but the flower girl's smile, still like the bewildering provincial sunshine, was all that ever repaid them for their gushing raptures. Sometimes Delmet took Vera to sing in Noctambules, down in the Quarter, where we of common prices could rend the air with bravas and rend our hearts in efforts to win from Vera something more than smiles—for who could help it, high or low? Were we not Parisians? What is Paris for?

At that time, at least, I doubt if Maglione would have cared a straw if we had succeeded. He had so gone back into his dream of dreams that once more he considered us all only beastly

annoyances, and even Vera but a necessary incident when he happened to require her. And Vera felt it. I am sure that she felt it, for more than once I saw tears making her eyes brighter as they rested on the gloomy blackness poised on Maglione's broad shoulders. But she never meant that we should know it, and never a single block would she go with any of us on the road to Potinville, the city where Dame Grundy dwells. And still she was happy, even in those days—and why not? She was making all Paris laugh. She was making little Paul Delmet happy, singing so much more out of his songs than he had dreamed into them. And, withal, had she not two instead of one at home to love? And even if she did not make Maglione seem as happy as she would have liked—as happy in herself and the baby—she was at least supporting all three of them, and they were living better than they had ever lived before. She knew that the dream must be growing and that she was making as smooth as possible the way to its realization—the masterpiece—the Goddess of Something, for fortune and fame and the Grand Salon!

There were signs, too, that it was growing; for had not Maglione at last bought the magnificent canvas and mounted it, and a monstrous easel to hold it, and a high stool to reach it, and all with the money she had earned? With “Help, help and make happy,” the motto of her life, how could she be sad? Oh, *l'amour des femmes*! Oh, secret of Paris: how to suffer and not be sad! *Cela m'est égal*!

But the baby died; and poor, broken-hearted Vera tried in vain to sing the laughing songs for Delmet in the gay *cabaret*. Maglione would not even go with her to the burial—he was so busy sketching in the grand design; but he told her to hurry back and pose for him. He did not shed a tear; which made Vera shed all the more—more than enough for both, because she loved him so.

It happened just at the *Jour des Rois*, the New Year feast of Epiphany, when every café was ablaze and every

street a blare, scintillating with the poetry of piety. The day after the funeral Delmet went to Maglione's rooms early, hoping against hope that he could persuade Vera to pull herself together and sing that night; not so much for the fact that there would be great money in the *cabaret* through the holidays as that the excitement would help to drag her away from the sorrow in the empty cradle and the gloom enshrouding Maglione. But Maglione only remembered that she had gone out and he was angry because he wanted her to pose. Delmet went on the street again, muttering: "Some paths of glory lead by queer curves to the grave."

He was a better prophet than he knew. But he fancied he could tell where to look for Vera and turned down the Boulevard, lined on either side with little booths for the two weeks' *jours de fête*. Rapid progress was not easy there, for it was nearly six o'clock, when all society is out in Paris, shopping and showing itself, in the mystic, rose-tinted mists of a winter's twilight. The streets were crowded with tempting visions in priceless furs enfolded in creations of satin and laces, flashing for an instant, then lost in pink obscurity. But dodging unheeding among them Delmet made his way out to the cemetery, creeping silently through shadows up to a little unmarked spot where he found Vera kneeling, as he thought. She had laid on the grave the universal New Year's gift, the little *galette*, for the feast of Epiphany—a cake, just a roll of crust with a tiny china doll in the center. He said nothing till she turned away. Even then he said nothing. He simply walked silently back beside her, through the darkening evening and the brighter glowing streets. He said nothing of the *cabaret*, but gently took her hand as they approached a church near her home and led her in. He left her there, kneeling and sobbing. It was better than singing and laughing. He left her with only a prayer and a silent pressure of his kind hand; but he did not realize, nor did she, that it was their last parting this side of where there

shall be no more tears, neither sorrow nor crying.

In his rage over the interruption Maglione turned against the whole of us and declared that such a grand theme as his dream could not expand within him and grow on such a canvas in those crowded confines. He said that he must be alone; and in saying it I know that he included Vera only as he included the canvas and easel. Vera had already laid by a little for the next rainy day, and suddenly, without a word of warning or farewell, they left us. No one knew where they had gone; and we only felt instinctively how much it must have cost poor Vera to leave the realm where her beautiful Filipava once lived, where her mother was and where the baby lay buried—where she had been so happy and, for only a few hours, so sad. But the one dogma of her ethics was, "All for the man I love."

Of the months that followed who knows? I am glad that I, at least, do not. One morning I received an incoherent note from Maglione, begging me to come at once to an address which he gave me—a village in the extreme northeast of France, almost on the border line; an isolated village which time had forgotten in its onrush, a scrap of centuries ago left unmolested to wander into today. The house stood away from the village and only one room was furnished. Oh, but such furnishing!

The room was neither small nor low. At one end stood a giant easel, supporting a large canvas. Before it was a high stool. At the other end on the floor of the room was a straw mattress. Between them there was so little and all broken. Dear heaven, how little! How broken! At one corner of the painting Maglione knelt, putting the last graceful curve on his mysterious cipher signature. It was Maglione, haggard, black and wild, covered only by ragged trousers and an unlaundered shirt hanging open at the neck, the black breast hair protruding—Maglione the immaculate!

He did not notice me, and for the

moment I forgot him, too. The painting on the easel was beyond the reach of words, magnificent! It was the birth of Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, bursting from the womb of the foaming sea, waking among the marvelous tints that touch the waves! A triumph of genius! A masterpiece! The meteor had flashed in Maglione and in the flame expired. He rose slowly and glared at me with sunken, dark-rimmed, blood-shot eyes, set in a face emaciated, but flushed, dark red. Swaying unsteadily, he flung his palette and brushes madly on the floor. With one hand he pointed to the canvas, with the other to the straw bed.

"One is the price of the other," he said. "You were the only decent one I knew, so I sent for you, to give them both to you. They are both my work."

He turned away. Hatless, coatless, barefooted, he left the room. I have never seen him since nor heard of him. God grant I never may! I turned from the matchless dream, the beautiful,

laughing Vera, lying in the soft arms of the tinted sea foam—glorious Goddess of Love—finished at last and ready for the Grand Salon and fame and fortune; and crossing the empty room I knelt upon the floor beside the straw; for on it lay, emaciated to a shadow, another baby on her arm, the white, starved Vera.

Poor, beautiful sacrifice! It was the price of love, and she had paid it sooner even than her Filipava. Poor Vera! And tears are all that I can give to you, in return for the smiles which you have given me. But your life was far from lost, sweet, laughing Vera. On Maglione it was thrown away, just as your Filipava threw hers away on something else; but many a soul was made happier because you were, and will always be happier because you have been, Fairy of Sunshine. And the little white birds that tell the Judge of All about the good deeds done will be thick around you in that day. That's something, Vera.

FOR THE NEW-YORK EVANGELIST.

MADAME ROLAND.

BY REV. JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

A young lady so fascinating in mind and person could not but attract much attention, and many suitors had been allured to solicit her hand. Her father, regarding commerce as the source of wealth, and wealth as the source of greatness, was anxious that his daughter should accept some of the lucrative offers she was receiving from young men of the family acquaintance, who were engaged in trade. The proud spirit of Jeanne revolted from such a connection. From her sublimated position among ancient heroes, and her ambitious aspirings, she looked down with contempt upon those whose energies were expended in traffick, and declared that she would have no husband but one whose feelings were in sympathy with her own. To some of the solicitations of her father, when a rich meat merchant of the neighborhood solicited her hand, she replied—"I will not descend from my noble imaginings. What I want is a *soul*, not a *fortune*. I will die single, rather than prostitute my own mind in a union with a being with whom I have no sympathies. Brought up, from my infancy, in connection with the great men of all ages; familiar with lofty ideas and illustrious examples—have I lived with Plato, with all the philosophers, all the poets, all the politicians of antiquity, merely to unite myself with a shopkeeper, who will neither appreciate nor feel anything as I do."

About this time her mother died. Her father, a victim to the infidelity of the times, surrendered himself to the dominion of passion, and disorder reigned through the desolated household. Jeanne had the mortification of seeing one take her mother's place, in a union unsanctified by the laws of God. A deep melancholy settled down upon the mind of the wounded girl, and she felt desolate and an alien in her own home. Thus far, her intellectual powers and her imagination had been mainly cultivated. Plato and Plutarch had been her teachers. The Heloise of Rousseau now fell into her hands, and its deep sensibility and pathos touched responsive chords in her own spirit. There never was genius, untinged by melancholy. A noble mind cannot but at times be deeply oppressed with destiny. The pensive muse now took possession of the heart of Jeanne. She began to dream of happiness in loving and being loved. It was the romantic age of life, and romance and philosophy were strangely and passionately blended in her heart. In lonely musings she solaced herself, and nurtured her own thoughts by writing. Her pen became her friend. She freely gave utterance, in her diary, to all her feelings and all her emotions. Thus she acquired that power of expression, that eloquence which in subsequent life so often astonished and charmed her friends. In every development of character, in the most eventful subsequent career of Madame Roland, one can trace the influence of these vicissitudes of early life, and of these impressions thus powerfully stamped upon her nature. Philosophy, romance, religious sentiment—an impassioned mind and a glowing heart, admiration of heroism and emulation of martyrdom, all conspired to give her sovereignty and to enable her to sway human will almost at her pleasure.

One day Jeanne was seated in her little room, absorbed in pensive dreamings, when a gentleman entered, bringing a letter of introduction to her from a female friend, an enthusiastic admirer of her character, who had recently been married and was settled in Amiens.

"You will receive this letter," her friend wrote, "by the hand of the philosopher, of whom I have spoken to you already, M. Roland, an enlightened man of antique manners, without reproach, except for his passion for the ancients, his contempt of his age, and his too high estimation of his own virtue."

The gentleman thus introduced to her was about fifty years of age. He was tall and slender, with a little stoop in his gait, and manifested that awkwardness of manner which is an almost invariable result of a life passed in seclusion and with books. Still, says Madame Roland, in her description of his person, his manners were unembarrassed and winning, and without possessing the easy elegance of the man of fashion, they united the politeness of the well-bred man to the seriousness of the philosopher. He was very thin, with a complexion much tanned; his brow, already covered by very little hair and very broad, did not detract from his regular but unattractive features. He had, however, a pleasing smile, and his features an animated play, which gave them a totally different appearance when they were excited in speaking or listening. His voice was manly—his mode of speech brief, like a man with shortened breath—his conversation, full of matter because his head was full of ideas, occupied the mind more than it flattered the ear.

Jeanne saw in the philosopher one of the sages of antiquity. All his sentiments were in harmony with a certain class of sentiments which she most ardently cherished. She found what she had never found before, a truly sympathetic soul. It is true, that the mind of M. Roland never entered those visionary realms of beauty and of romance, where Jeanne loved at times to revel. And Jeanne venerated him perhaps the more, for his more manly philosophy. But his meditative wisdom, his abstraction from the frivolous pursuits of life, his high ambition, his consciousness of superiority over the mass of his fellow-men, and his desire to be a benefactor of humanity, were all traits of character which resistlessly attracted the admiration of Jeanne. She adored him, as a disciple adores his master. She listened eagerly to all his words, and loved communion with his thoughts. There was no ardor of youthful love, warming her heart; there were no impassioned affections glowing in her bosom and impelling her to his side. But intellectual enthusiasm animated her in welcoming a Platonic union with a sublime mind.

M. Roland, on the other hand, looked with placid and paternal admiration upon the brilliant girl. He was captivated by her genius and the charms of her conversation, and above all by her profound admiration of himself. They were mutually happy in each other's society, and were glad to meet, and loath to part. They conversed upon literary projects, upon political reforms, upon speculations in philosophy and science. M. Roland was naturally self-confident, opinionated and domineering. Jeanne regarded him with so much reverence, that she received his opinions for law. Thus he was flattered and she was happy.

M. Roland returned to his official post at Amiens as government inspector of manufactures. He was

also engaged in some scientific researches, and was preparing a work upon Italy. The lovers, if they may so be called, carried on a voluminous and regular correspondence. M. Roland forwarded to Jeanne, in manuscript, all the sheets of his proposed publication, and she returned them with the accompanying thoughts which their perusal elicited. Now and then an expression of decorous endearment would escape from each pen, in the midst of philosophic discussions and political speculations.

M. Roland wrote to the father of Jeanne, demanding his daughter's hand. He received in return a blunt refusal. The father, living himself in lawless indulgence, wished not to expose himself to the censure of a man of such austere virtue. He also feared that his child would find in the stern philosopher but a master and a tyrant. Jeanne laid this refusal of her father deeply to heart, and resolving that if she could not marry M. Roland, she would marry no one, she retired to a convent. Here she subjected herself to the most rigorous discipline, as if she would triumph over the ills of life by courting still greater ills. She lived upon the most frugal fare, which she prepared with her own hands, and plunged into the most profound and unremitted studies. She was young, imaginative and impetuous, and in vigils and self-sacrifice fed her melancholy.

Jeanne, however, was not a little mortified and wounded, in not meeting with corresponding sensibility on the part of M. Roland. He was apparently very submissive to the refusal he had received, and instead of searching out Jeanne in her retreat, as she had expected, and hurrying her away with enthusiastic ardor to a romantic union, for six months he did not go to see her, and scarcely wrote to her. At last he called at the convent, and saw Jeanne behind a grating. The sight of one who had suffered so much from her faithful love for him, and the sound of her voice, renewed impressions which were fast fading from his mind. He again urged her to accept his hand, and to receive the nuptial blessing from his brother, who was the prior of the convent. Jeanne, though not a little piqued that he could have so long delayed making efforts to draw her from the convent, yielded to his appeals, though she confesses that the illusion of romantic love had passed from her mind. They were married in the winter of 1780. Madame Roland was then 25 years of age. Her husband was about fifty. Madame Roland returned to Amiens with her unimpassioned spouse, and immediately engaged with all ardor in aiding him in his literary enterprises. She lived in his study, with him; became the companion of all his thoughts, and his assistant in all his labors. Her husband engrossed all her time, and wished so to seclude her from the society of others, as to monopolize all her capabilities of friendly feeling. She submitted to the exaction without a murmur, though there were hours in which she felt that she had made indeed a serious sacrifice of her youthful and buoyant affections. Thus four years glided away; four years of solitude and of arduous study. Whenever Madame Roland appeared in society, her husband perceived that she attracted attention and admiration, and he feared lest she might meet with those, more young and attractive, who might rob him of at least a portion of her heart.

From Amiens, where M. Roland resided four years, he removed to Lyons. ~~He continued to discharge his duties of commissioner of manufactures.~~ He took up his residence in the paternal mansion, where his mother, an irritable and domineering woman, still lived. Here Madame Roland underwent every trial of patience which a woman could well experience. She was young, beautiful, and endowed with the richest genius. Her husband was stoical, severe and exacting. Her mother-in-law was fretful and overbearing. And her husband's brother, who resided with them, was coarse and rough, and totally regardless of her feelings. But her disciplined spirit triumphed over all these annoyances, and she gradually infused through the discordant household, harmony and peace.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MARGUERITE RUTHVEN'S TEMPTATION.

BY MRS. LAUNT THOMPSON.

"You remember Marguerite?"

The question was put by a stately old lady of seventy or more, who, as she spoke, adjusted her knitting and studied its pattern with elaborate interest. Her companion, a big, burly, fair man, with a magnificent crisp blonde beard, which seemed to have absorbed all the sunlight of the gray November day, was by no means so embarrassed. He looked straight at his interlocutor, with a slightly satirical gleam in his blue eyes, and answered, tranquilly:

"A man does not always forget the woman he once loved, even though he may have loved another woman better. I have been married and happy, and widowed and desolate; but I remember Marguerite with pleasure and"—He paused a moment, and added, with a smile, "without sentimentality."

As he finished his sentence, he rose, and, advancing a step or two, bent his tall figure so as to bring his eyes as nearly as possible on a level with those of his companion and said: "Why?"

This time the old lady dropped her knitting on her lap, and, raising a pair of keen, dark eyes to his, answered:

"You know her child is dead?"

"No," he replied, with a slight blush.

"Yes, indeed," said the old lady. "Poor Marguerite! It was a pretty child, too."

She rose and, going to a table, at a little distance, opened a large velvet case and put it into his hand.

"There they are," she said.

He looked at it for a moment and then shut it up, hastily, saying:

"Even then her beauty was on the wane."

"Ah! yes," said the old lady. "She was thirty-three and the child seven when that miniature was taken. Blanche was twelve when she died."

Then a long silence fell. At last he broke it by saying:

"I always thought she loved that child better than her husband."

"You are a brave man, Alex," answered his old friend, rather irrelevantly, "and you have more sense than most men; for, after all, the male is the unreasonable sex. But still you are not free from the idea that, because you once liked her, she did not greatly care for her husband. She adored him when she married him and she showed great devotion to him always. But I will admit that she loved her child best."

Alexis smiled as he answered:

"I am quite sure of it, and I think she would probably have done so whoever she had married. Poor Marguerite!"

"Aye, poorer than you know," said the old lady, nodding. "She had all the elements of tragedy in her nature and, brilliant and beautiful as she was, it has been her lot to pass the best years of her life in a daily struggle to make both ends meet and to soothe and satisfy a captious invalid. She had, to be sure, the joy of motherhood to console her, and now that, too, is gone. There is something awful to me in the thought of her desolation. She has no power to knit up the raveled sleeve of life, and no will, either, for that matter. I wrote to her when her child died; but I begged her not to feel obliged to reply to me, and I should scarcely have dared to write had not I, too, suffered once. Well, she did not reply until her two sisters, who, by the way, care nothing for her, wearied her with importunities to come home and find her hap-

pininess in the contemplation of theirs. Now you know that Marguerite's is not a temperament to subsist on borrowed blessings—

"No, indeed," said Alexis, laughing. "To tell the truth, Aunt Selina, I did not know that she possessed a relative who understood her so well. So she wrote to you, at last. Did she?"

"Three lines," answered Aunt Selina; "begging me to make them let her alone. Stay! I have the letters and will give them to you to read at your leisure. Poor Marguerite! You remember when you first saw her, Alexis? You did not think her pretty. You remember?"

"I remember perfectly," said Alexis, with a smile. "Remember! You forget that it was some years before I could get her out of my head. I did not like her at all at first. By Heaven! how she fascinated me afterward! What a lovely, capricious, imperious, loyal creature she was; full of faults and contradictions and provocations, but so fascinating! I have seen some thousands of better and more beautiful and some hundreds of cleverer women; but so fascinating a woman never. For mere beauty, you know, her sisters surpassed her—"

"Yes, yes. Perfect beauties and foolish and phlegmatic," answered Aunt Selina. "But never mind them. They have good husbands and children and plenty of money—all that heart can desire, in short; while the only blessing one can foretell for Marguerite is death. But, in the meantime, I wish—"

"What?" said Alexis.

"Let me tell you how they have been living all these years," continued the old lady, ignoring his question. "Lewis, you know, was for a long time consul at different Spanish ports. It was imagined to eke out their small income. He died, at last, in Madeira, and Blanche, three months ago, in the same or wight. But they are both buried here. And, now that it is done, Marguerite has gone to the Italian mountains; but where I do not know. Think of her desolation, Alexis!" she continued, rising and laying her slim old jeweled hand on his arm. "I wish you would go and see her."

Alexis pulled his beard in silence for some moments before he answered, briefly:

"It might be an intrusion."

"No, no," said Aunt Selina, shaking her head. "My sorrows were accomplished fifty years ago—before you were born; and yet you have not only been as a son to me, you have given me the truest sympathy I ever had. Trust to my knowledge of you both and go and see her. You will?" she added, earnestly.

"I will," responded Alexis, taking her hand with a kindly smile.

A long silence fell between them after that, Alexis gazing into the fire. Suddenly he said, with a half sigh:

"We are both alone now."

"Both?" said Aunt Selina, raising her eyebrows inquiringly.

A slight blush made itself visible through Alexis's fine, bronzed visage, as he answered:

"I meant Marguerite."

"Ah! yes," said Aunt Selina, and, as Alexis did not look at her, she was at no trouble to suppress the smile which flitted over her lips. "You are still young, however," she said. "Go away, travel, and occupy yourself, and do not look for happiness, and who knows? You may find it some day. God bless you always," she continued, as he rose to take leave. "Take the letters with you, and read them when you are fairly off."

A week later, as Alexis sat on the deck of the ship, watching the port of Boston recede in the distance, he opened the packet which Aunt Selina had given him and read Marguerite Ruthven's letters.

"MY DEAR JANE:

"I have received your letters and Lucy's, and thank you and her for your kindness and generosity. I will not, however, exact the one or tax the other. All places are alike to me now and I shall never care to see again the home of my youth. Could I find Lewis and Blanche there more than in the rest of the world? For the last twelve years I have had continued trials. I am now desolate and in despair and can neither speak of my trials nor be consoled by change of place and scene. And yet I am not insane and I should scorn to commit suicide. How, even so, could I escape?"

"Your affectionate sister,

"MARGUERITE DALRYMPLE RUTHVEN."

This letter was enclosed in a larger sheet which, however, only contained three lines written in the same distinct and delicate hand:

MY DEAR AUNT SELINA:

"For God's sake make them let me alone. I am not mad; but I wish to be lost and forgotten."

MARGUERITE."

Alexis put the letters into his breast, and sat long, looking on the gray, tossing sea.

Desolate as sea and sky were, the same November day looked yet more gray and sad in the gloomy gorge of the Ponte Nero, among the Lucchese Mountains, where Marguerite Ruthven was slowly climbing the steep bridle-path which led to the mountain village of Lucchalo. She had rushed away from the world in her despair, with an undefined idea that, removed from the daily current of life and the formalities of consolation, her cross might be easier to bear. But it was not so. At each turn of the rough pathway a fresh, fierce agony seemed to clutch her heart. How often, up that same pathway, she had watched with delight her fair, slim girl moving before her, her bright hair waving in the wind, that bright hair which now was thrust out of sight forever beneath the northern snows. Up the mountain a shadowy procession seemed to pass before her, the procession of her lost joys, which she was following to their burial place. Once or twice she dropped the bridle and wrung her hands. To change and change and find the same old torture still was a pain beyond endurance.

The good Paolo, who strode by her bridle-rein and ever and anon put forth a tenderly, careful hand to support her slight figure, as it swayed wearily to and fro, glanced often, with infinite pity, at her worn, pale face. He, too, had suffered, and longed to speak a word of sympathy; but, with the unerring tact of his race, he refrained, and contented himself with many an earnest, silent prayer, as he walked steadily on.

At last the painful journey was over, the guides paid and dismissed, and the door closed upon the kind old padrona, who had welcomed her with many tears, and Marguerite Ruthven was alone in the retreat she had chosen.

It was a large, vaulted room, the wide windows protected by iron bars, furnished simply with an iron bedstead, two rush-bottomed chairs, a table, and an antique carved chest for linen. The ceiling and walls were freshly whitewashed, and on the wall, opposite the door, hung an iron crucifix, with a vase beneath it for holy water. Marguerite walked up to it and rested her head against it. Then, with a low whisper, "There is comfort there for some, but not for me," she turned away and walked restlessly about the room, until she sank fainting on her rough bed and slept the sleep of exhaustion. When the cold November dawn awoke her, the next morning, it was to the thought which was her sole comfort now, as it has been that of other suffering souls; namely, that a certain span of life is appointed to each human being, and that another day might be struck off from those assigned to her. She had longed for solitude, dreaming that in solitude she might find the dull repose which might deaden her agony. But it was denied her. The Winter deepened, the snow cut off all communication with the outer world; but the clutch of sorrow was unrelenting. Seated at her iron-barred window, she watched the pageant of each day pass over the valley, as it had ever done since the world began; but, as it seemed to her, more and more slowly every day. There are times when Nature seems to lengthen her operations in order to add to the torture of some suffering souls, and such utter weariness was Marguerite Ruthven's portion now. Worn in body, from the ceaseless heartache, which, as all the bereaved know, is a physical as well as mental pain, and suffering none the less because unconsciously from her rough lodging and coarse food, she felt an illness growing upon her day by day, which she prayed might be mortal; yet it was her fate to live. One day, when she had returned from one of the long walks in which she sought such exhaustion as might bring sleep, a strange longing awoke in her to throw the burden of her weakness upon stronger hands, a longing which amazed

her, she had believed herself so lost to desires of any kind. With a heavy sigh she sat down, and, leaning her head against the rough wall behind her, dreamed of rest.

Meanwhile, the grandest gentleman who had been seen in Lucchalo for many a day was standing in the little piazza, surrounded by an admiring audience, and was stating with decision his knowledge of the Signora Margharita Ruthven's residence in Lucchalo and intimating his desire to be conducted to her presence.

Madonna Luisa Santi joined the group, distaff in hand, and, on learning his errand, motioned him to follow her.

"Signore," said she, turning round to address him, as they reached her house. "Signore, the Signora Marguerite bade me admit no one; but I see that your excellency is a real Signore and good and true, and I can obey the Signora no longer. It goes ill with her, very ill. She has a cough which tears her in two, and a sparrow could not live on what she eats; and, though I know she wishes to die, yet it is necessary to wait the will of God—and—Pace! Signore."

Alexis followed her up the steps, and into a huge vaulted room, bare and desolate. There was a fireplace, but no fire, and, seated on a heap of wood, her head leaning back against the wall, her hands clasped on her knee, was the woman he sought. She was dressed in deepest black, and a black hood, which had been thrown back from her head and rested on her shoulders, threw into strong relief the marble whiteness of her face, a face still lovely from the nobleness and purity of its outlines and the exquisite fairness of the skin; but wasted and changed otherwise, almost beyond recognition. Her dusky brown hair, closely

brushed with gray, hung in thick ringlets on either side of her pale cheeks, and the clear, firmly-traced outline of her straight brows and her long, dark eyelashes gave the only touch of color to her face. Her hands, not beautiful, but white, slender, aristocratic hands, were ungloved, and a big brilliant blazing upon one of them formed a distinct point of light amid the fast thickening shadows of the room.

"Povera Signora!" said Madonna Luisa, in a low whisper. "She is tired and will not hear. She throws herself down there whenever she comes in. But she is wasting away."

Notwithstanding Alexis Seymour's robust manliness, there was a certain angelic quality in his nature which made him the very ideal of a friend, and when Marguerite Ruthven woke from her wretched sleep, to find him standing opposite to her, the deep compassion of his glance fell like balm upon her weary spirit.

"Alexis!" she said, rising and put both hands out to greet him, with a long sigh of relief, which spoke a deeper welcome than words.

"Oh! I have been so happy since I saw you last!" she continued, lifting her large dark eyes to his kind face. "And it is all over! Blanche was my last, my only tie to life. She was so lovely! I hoped to die; but—it is not—all over yet—as I hoped it would be."

She motioned him to a seat, and sat down opposite, the large tears rolling slowly down her cheeks. "You made me cry, Alex," she continued; "and yet it comforts me to see you, and I had thought that nothing would ever comfort me again. And now tell me about yourself, Alex. I grieved for you when I heard that you had lost your lovely wife and your boys."

"Yes," said Alexis, "I know you did. Your letter was one of exquisite sympathy. Poor Marguerite!" he added, with a smile, "yours was always real, not conventional sympathy. You felt the same glow of angry, impatient rebellion against your friend's sorrow which rose within you against your own; and it comforted me at the time."

"Yes," said Marguerite, rising and moving toward the table, on which he leaned. "Yes, that is true. I know well that God lives, and that He has a right to do as He will with His own; and yet it seems to me that it would be so easy, so harmless to make people happy, instead of wretched. Stop, Alex! I know what you are going to say; that this is not all of life. Perhaps not. I may add, with truth, I too believe not."

But I do not feel it. It cannot console me. If I am mute, I do all that I can do—my best. "Oh! Alex," she said again, leaning forward to gaze at him, while something like the shadow of a smile flitted over her face and lent it for the moment the charm of vanished youth—"oh! Alex, it is a consolation to see you again."

He rose and took her hand and kissed it. "It gives me, too, infinite pleasure to see you again," he answered. "And I shall come again to-morrow."

"Will you?" she replied, eagerly. "But you cannot. The way is too long and rough."

"I will and can," said Alexis, smiling. "I shall come not once, but many times."

He kept his word. Through storm and sunshine, for many days he mounted the steep mountain-path, and sat daily for hours with Marguerite, talking of her past sorrows and his own, and, later, of all things in Heaven and earth.

Madonna Luisa Santi, meanwhile, sat apart in the deep window-seat, playing duenna (a part which, however absurd in the case of two middle-aged friends, is yet never considered superfluous in Italy), her distaff in her hand, spinning an apparently never-ending thread, and wondering what on earth the *forestieri* were talking about.

Apparently, the conversation, however interesting it might be, never turned upon love, the wordless signs of which Madonna Luisa was well experienced in detecting; but, nevertheless, the Signora Marguerite revived in this new companionship, like a flower in the sun.

Alexis's daily visits had continued, in point of fact, for several weeks; but, as it seemed to Marguerite only a few days, when one afternoon, as he rose to take leave, after a longer conversation than usual, he said: "It is really good-bye to-day. I must go on to Rome to-morrow."

A sudden spasm of pain contracted Marguerite's heart as he spoke, though she answered, tranquilly: "It has been a great comfort to see you and you have been good and compassionate in coming so often. You have lightened the burden of life for me. But I must not keep you now. It is late and the night will fall before you reach the main road. Madonna Luisa, will you light the *lucerna*, and then light the Signore down-stairs? It is growing late."

There was the slightest possible fall in her voice as she spoke.

"Good-bye," said Alexis, taking her hand in his.

"Good-bye," she answered. "God bless you and make you happy."

"And you?" he said, lingering.

"Signore!" called Madonna Luisa. "Signore! Pietro says your excellency has no time to lose. A storm is coming up." A moment more and he was gone.

Mrs. Ruthven was still standing at the window and listening to the receding echo of Alexis's firm footfall on the paved pathway, when she felt a light touch on her arm.

"Pardon, Signora," said Madonna Luisa. "Here is a letter which the Signore forgot to give you."

"Good," answered Marguerite, listlessly. "Put it on the table."

But it was not until all the household was asleep that she again thought of the letter, and, as she took it up, saw with surprise that the cover was directed in Alexis's clear, firm hand. She opened it and read:

"MY DEAR MARGUERITE:

"I was mistaken in thinking that I could see you and not love you again. If not as in the days of our youth, perhaps better. You were to me once and are to me again the dearest and sweetest, ay, and fairest of women. Do not think this a mere lover's compliment. Such compliments would be absurd between such sorrow-worn, middle-aged lovers as you and I. Believe, however, what is the simple truth, that you are still most dear to me, and may be a blessing to me, if you will.

"Come to me, Marguerite! For the years that remain to us, be they few or many, let us be together."

"I am, if you will have it so, through life till death, your devoted,"

"ALEXIS SEYMOUR."

Four days afterward a carriage stood once more at the entrance to the path of Lucchalo, and Marguerite Ruthven bade farewell to her mountain solitude forever. She

posted on her way northward the following letter:

"MY DEAR ALEXIS:

"Your letter is, like yourself, loyal, true, and noble, and it went straight to my heart. I love you so much, yes, there is no one now on earth whom I love better, that this once, for the last time, I will lay bare my soul to you. I should be untrue did I not say that your offer has been a great temptation to me. Indeed, day after day, since your letter came, I have had to struggle with a desire to call you back and rest upon your strong heart and brain the remnant of my worn and wearied life. Perhaps I could even make you happy for a time, but not for a lifetime. I should sooner or later be a burden to you. I am become one of those who say in the morning 'Would God it were evening,' and in the evening 'Would God it were morning.' And then marriage was not to me, what it is apparently to half the human race, a tie terminable by death. For me the past, that past which I cannot change now, even if I would, bars the possibility of my ever again being a wife. My dead husband, my dead child have vanished out of sight. No sense of their invisible nearness consoles me, no well-assured hope that we shall meet again inspires me, and yet, as I belonged to them once, so it seems to me I must belong to them now, whether we meet again or not. I have lost the power to take up life again; and, though it seems a paradox, I love you, the best and noblest man I have ever known, too well to be willing to bind you to my remnant of a life. I could not do it. I should feel that I wronged you, and even, if I made you happy for a time, the sense of that wrong would pierce me with remorse, for I know well that I am not indispensable to your happiness.

"Farewell, beloved Alexis,

"MARGUERITE DALRYMPLE RUTHVEN."

Alexis had often said that he understood Marguerite Ruthven perfectly. That he did so was proved by the fact that he made no attempt to change her decision; but pursued his travels, extending them for scientific reasons, further than he had originally intended, and it was not until eighteen months later, while serving as a volunteer aid in the German army, that he first heard her name.

He had been into the ambulance hospital to see a wounded officer, and was about to leave it, when one of the surgeons touched him on the arm, saying:

"You are Colonel Seymour, I think?"

"Yes," he answered, surprised.

"An American lady, a volunteer nurse and a very good nurse, was mortally wounded yesterday. She recognized your voice, and—"

"It is Madame Ruthven?" said Alexis, quickly, and suddenly felt that he had always known how it would be.

The physician lifted a curtain which screened off a corner of the ward, and motioned him to enter. Marguerite welcomed him with a bright smile, a smile which for a moment lent youth to her wan visage, then murmured some inarticulate words. Bending over her, Alexis could just distinguish: "To die alone."

He answered by taking her hand in his. A few moments later she started and murmured "Alex."

"I am here, Marguerite."

"I have been dreaming, I think. I thought that you were gone. I hope I may go first. Say the last prayer for me, Alex. But first I must tell you the truth." She paused, struggling for breath. "You will be happy some day, happier than if I had yielded to temptation. It was a temptation." Her voice sank slowly with her failing breath. and Alexis, in obedience to her glance and gesture, took up the worn prayer book which was lying beside her and began that sublime prayer which has so often been uttered by grieving lips in dying ears. Before it was ended he knew that she had departed, though so tranquil had been her going that no slightest vibration had stirred the fragile hand still clasped in his.

Ten years have come and gone since then. The worn, wasted, wounded body, which was once the mortal envelope of fair Marguerite Ruthven, has long been resting beside her child's grave on the slopes of Mount Auburn. Alexis has married, and his house resounds once more with boyish voices, and, while glad, no doubt, that things are as they are, instead of as he once would have had them, he recalls sometimes with a strange, deep tenderness the memory of her who for his sake, resisted the temptation to marry him.

FLORENCE, ITALY.

ON THIS SIDE.

VI.

THE Ketchums' house was the largest of eight handsome villas built by various magnates of Kalsing a few miles out of the city, in a kind of natural park improved by the most careful culture, the whole being known as Fairfield. It was impossible to say what was the extent of the grounds attached to any particular house, for the reason that there were no visible boundaries of any kind, the owners of the different properties having agreed to share the park amicably without insisting upon individual rights to the extent of building high brick walls, or fences of any kind, sightly or unsightly, except such light wire affairs as might be required immediately around the houses. At the same time there was individual care and taste everywhere,—not general neglect, such as had been predicted when the experiment was first talked of. The rivalries were only friendly ones about the earliest strawberries and finest roses, and the effect was worthy of the clever landscape-gardener in whose hands Fairfield had been placed by common consent.

Instead of the aggravated jealousies and perpetual dissensions which some persons had confidently declared inseparable from such a scheme, there was a great amount of peace and good will in the little colony. Each proprietor not

only improved his own place to the full, but cheerfully paid his quota toward certain paths, bridges, roads, and lamps intended to benefit all, and seemed to take scarcely less pride in the whole estate than in his share of it. A plan pronounced Utopian had become an accomplished fact.

The Ketchums' house struck Sir Robert as the sort of one that called for about a thousand acres at its back, and, not doubting that his host had felt that earth-fever that always seizes an Englishman when he has made a fortune, he supposed him to have bought a handsome estate and set up as a country gentleman,—the *ne plus ultra* of dignity, respectability, and everything that is desirable from an Englishman's standpoint. He knew nothing of the gregariousness, love of excitement, and indifference to country pursuits that make such possessions seldom coveted, or, if coveted and possessed, soon tired of, by American millionaires, and he was surprised to see from his bedroom window the red mansard roof of Mr. Brown's elaborate mansion. He met Mr. Ketchum on the steps as he was going down to the drawing-room, and they walked out on the veranda, where they got into comfortable chairs and fell to talking of many things,—of their meeting in England and the interval

that had elapsed, of mutual acquaintances, and a little of what the party had been doing.

"Well, and how do you like these United? You have seen worse countries, haven't you?" said Mr. Ketchum.

"Immensely, my dear fellow," replied Sir Robert, answering the first question. "I am even more interested than I expected to be, which is saying a great deal. I have not had the chance to think what I do think yet. We have been so constantly on the wing that it was not possible to digest the facts I have collected; but, if I can only boast an intimate ignorance of it so far, it is quite certain that I mean to know it as well as any foreigner can. Are you an American at large, or primarily a Westerner and only very incidentally an American?"

"Oh, I claim the whole pocket-handkerchief; but of course I hold up my corner," said Mr. Ketchum.

"Doesn't that rather dilute your patriotism?" asked Sir Robert,—"confining yourself to one State?"

"No American does that. We all sit on a couple of States at least, take another for a footstool, and lean back against the rest. We like to do our own house-keeping, that is all, and have a prejudice in favor of managing our own affairs."

"It is all an experiment yet, you know," said Sir Robert, and went on to attach a good deal of significance to several "dangerous tendencies," notably the riots of the preceding year, from which he deduced "agrarian outrages" and other evils.

"We are not afraid of 'agrarian outrages' or 'Molly Maguires' or Communists or anything of the kind," asserted Mr. Ketchum, who had listened with an indulgent smile. "It is just the story of the buffalo and the fly."

"What is that?" asked Sir Robert.

"Oh, nothing, except that the fly gets shaken off and the buffalo goes ahead. It takes things easy, does that animal, but it don't do to fool with it. Even the politicians have found that out. When it does get its dander up, somebody is bound to get hurt."

It was Sir Robert's turn to smile when, on asking about his friend's health, Job said,—

"First-rate, as a rule, and mother-in-laws' stock below par. But about two weeks ago I got a fine large cold that has been giving me a rough time,—one of the sort that makes you feel as though your head had been *boiled* for a few weeks, and, when you have made a key-bugle of your nose for a week, decides which is your weakest point, and goes for it. It has been working on the ulcerated root of a tooth of mine that retired from business some time ago as a tombstone, and I'll be hanged if it wouldn't have waked the dead. It has pretty well used me up, I know. I feel like a fiddle with the bridge down today."

"I am sorry to hear that. I suppose you have consulted your medical man?" said Sir Robert.

"H-m! No. There is a medicine-man in the neighborhood; but I generally do my own doctoring when I require any,—which isn't often," replied Job.

"What is the extent of your place, if I may ask? Who is that living near you?" inquired Sir Robert. "Or is it a dower-house?"

Mr. Ketchum explained the Fairfield system to Sir Robert, who understood it well enough, but to whom it was not so clear why men who could afford to live in any other way had agreed to it.

"But there is plenty of land around here, isn't there? Or, if you must have neighbors, why don't you fence them out?" he asked.

"Oh, I *could* build a wall fifty feet high, with a frill of broken glass; but why should I? I don't want to shut myself in or shut my neighbors out. I came out here to be near them," said Mr. Ketchum.

"But you have no privacy," objected Sir Robert. "It must be disagreeable to have them prying in here and using their opera-glasses on you and your friends from the upper windows." (This was a novel idea to Mr. Ketchum, who laughed at it.) "I don't think I should like it myself. I don't like to be part

of a system. I like to be independent."

"There is the solar system, you know: you can't escape from that. No, I have got all the privacy I could want. If I wanted solitude, I'd buy Pitcairn's Island, three thousand miles from anywhere, and have the birds exterminated. And of course if I found it unpleasant I should go somewhere else. I have got a lot of stuff about me that my wife has accumulated, and it wouldn't be quite as easy to pull up sticks as it is in East Tennessee, where all you've got to do is to call the dogs and shut the doors; but, still, I think sometimes I should like it. Brown lives just there,—the Brown you met in New York."

"I remember. Do you like him?" asked Sir Robert. "Pleasant family?"

"I have always liked him; but he has got a brother living with him who is the meanest man in America," said Mr. Ketchum, with decision. "There are three brothers; but the third hasn't been in the family show-case for some time. He never was good for much. Brown got him situations over and over again; but he was like a second-hand postage-stamp,—he wouldn't stick; and at last he did something or other and had to go to Mexico to look after his estates there. Brown's married daughter lives with him, too; and you have met Miss Bijou. Very pleasant ladies. The eldest one married unfortunately, and has got a separation and come back to her father. They have got an Englishman staying with them now. I haven't seen much of him, but he has been grovelling at Mabel's feet for two weeks." This last was intended principally for his wife, who had joined them.

"How can you say such things? How can you wilfully exaggerate so?" she replied. "It isn't true, at all." And then, as he rose and preceded them into the drawing-room, she said to Sir Robert, "Husband was jesting. And do not suppose that I meant that he was untruthful. I am quite sure that he would not tell an untruth for the world. But husband rather distorts things some-

times for amusement,—you may have noticed it,—and I always fear it may be misunderstood." A speech that served the baronet as a kind of *mot de caractère* and interested him in his sweet, simple little hostess, whom he had known only casually in Cheltenham.

The other guests had all assembled, and some of them had clustered about a charming wood fire that Mabel had ordered, the evening having turned chilly.

"Ah, here we are. Not drowned, not hurt, and, like the politicians, 'in the hands of our friends,'" Mr. Ketchum said, as he caught sight of them, and, going forward, he held out a hand to Mr. Heathcote and one to Mr. Ramsay at the same time, saying, with the genial warmth that made him an irresistible fellow to some people, "I am right-down glad to have you here, I declare,—all of you; and what I want you to do is to make yourselves perfectly at home and as contented as you can.—Mabel, this fire might be improved, I think. Where is the Congressman?"

"It is burning beautifully, dear; and if you disturb it it will very likely spark about and burn holes in the rug," she said. But, as he continued to look about him restlessly, she got the blower obediently and gave it to him, and he, stooping down, held it up in front of the fire until it was all roar and crackle, and then put it away satisfied.

"A little too hot for you, isn't it?" he said to Miss Noel, who was pushing her chair back. "Getting a little personal, isn't it? Hold on. I'll fix that all right." He was about to drag forward a plate-glass screen to place in front of her, when the dining-room door was thrown open and "dinner" was announced by Sanford (the new butler, just imported from New York), napkin in hand and eyes down-dropped.

Mrs. Sykes's eyes almost bade farewell to their sockets when she saw Fräulein Schmidt's bugled head-dress and jimp-waisted black silk disappear through the door in front of her, a lank arm and wrinkled, tremulous old hand so adjusted as to make it certain that

she was being escorted by Mr. Ketchum. There had been a discussion about Job and his wife beforehand about this very matter. She had wanted him to do the conventional thing, which he refused utterly. She had suggested that he should make some apology—or let her do it, if he disliked the idea—for conduct so unprecedented from Miss Noel's point of view, not to speak of the others. Mrs. Vane had interested herself deeply in it as a vital question, and, not daring to tackle her son-in-law on the subject, had talked it to tatters with her daughter, and had prophesied that the whole party would leave the house on the following morning in mortal offence. Mrs. Ketchum senior had felt it her duty to tell her son that his English guests would certainly think that he had no respect for his own mother if he persisted in putting upon her a public affront, and that his duty, as she had said before and would say again, was to take *her* in to dinner. The result was that Mr. Ketchum calmly closed his ears to these appeals, declined to do, leave undone, or explain anything, and told Mabel that she might say what she pleased to the guests. Mrs. Ketchum, therefore, all soft deprecation and pretty, troubled concern, had explained to Miss Noel that it was "Husband's invariable rule," had imploringly "hoped she wouldn't mind," and had incidentally painted her lord's portrait as a kind of domestic archangel. And Miss Noel had "quite understood," and not been vexed at all; but Mabel was timid, and Mrs. Sykes was very awful to her, and she had not been able to make the dreadful declaration in that quarter. The thought of the Sykes stare, which certainly was Gorgonian and alarming to less shy persons, and the remembrance of the Sykes tongue, paralyzed this gentle young person at the very door of her cousin's room, and sent her down-stairs with the revelation unmade, leaving her amiable relative wholly unprepared for the shock that awaited her. "What's that for?" said Mrs. Sykes imperiously to Mrs. Vane, actually pointing in the direction

of the retreating figures. But there was no time for explanation. Mabel in a few murmurs had already paired the company, and they all followed in their host's wake.

The dinner was a well-ordered one, as was everything about the establishment; for to American abundance and variety, as shown in the ample provision for his household made by Job, Mabel added English management and thrift, and the result was a *ménage* which even their guests, accustomed to the almost military punctuality and mellow, stable comfort of the most perfect domestic system in the world, found delightful. It may be a pardonable digression to say here that Mabel had suffered almost as much from overplentifulness in America as she had ever done from undue scarcity in England. She had a conscientious horror of waste that made it a great moral question what she should do with the enormous quantities of food alone provided by her liberal-minded spouse, who had no practical experience of catering and a horror of being or seeing others stinted. It drove her quite wild at first to see the boxes, barrels, crates, coops, that he was always sending out from Kalsing, and her distress vented itself in an occasional mild exclamation, "What a dreadful country for waste, mamma dear!" To consume in any one house all that her husband provided was impossible. She could not have done it with a double staff of London servants, with their five meals a day and unlimited perquisites. To throw anything away, according to her creed, was wicked, and, according to Mrs. Vane, would certainly bring its retribution in personal want. At last, happily for all parties, a solution was found of the problem. A poor man, with a numerous progeny, moved into a particularly hopeless-looking cottage about a mile away on the Kalsing road, and that happy conjunction between food and mouths was effected which cynics declare does not often occur, and which lightened more hearts than Mabel's.

Gastronomically considered, the dinner, to which we must get back, pre-

sented no very striking features from first to last, unless it be accounted one that Sir Robert pronounced "the ices" quite the most delicious stuff he had ever tasted, and made acquaintance with pecans, which he thought so well of that he may be said to have become intimate with them on the spot and never to have separated from them afterward, as the pockets of all his coats testify to this day. Mrs. Sykes, whose appetite was immense, not only ate with great relish of such things as she was accustomed to, but absolutely made the daring experiment of trying one American dish, and reported on it promptly. "It is not as nasty and messy as it looks," she said to Miss Noel. "You might try it, if you like, but I should say it was perfectly indigestible. Still, one always likes to be able to say that one has tasted the native dishes, and after taking birds'-nest soup, as I did in Hong-Kong, I can stand a little of anything."

"A little of some—things goes a very long way," said Mr. Ketchum; and there was something in the way he said it that made Miss Noel rush into an account of her journey, which, containing as it did the episode of the conductor, completely restored his good humor. He laughed over it in a way that quite surprised his wife, and called out to her, "Only hear, Mabel, what dreadful liberties the great American citizen has been taking with the British aristocracy!"

At which Miss Noel said, "Oh, pray don't fancy that I was really annoyed! Do you know, I think it must have been a little way of his to give nicknames? Parsons tells me that he called two children that sat behind her 'Bub' and 'Sis.' I am quite sure that he meant nothing, and it didn't signify: it was only a little odd just at first."

This sent Mr. Ketchum off into a fresh explosion of merriment, but he caught Mrs. Sykes's next speech. "The impertinent man actually laid his hand on my arm, once, to attract my attention, and was most unpleasantly obtrusive," she was observing to Mabel.

"Good heavens! you don't mean it?"

I wonder that it was not paralyzed up to the shoulder! Such audacity—"he began, but, catching Mabel's eye and seeing that she was shaking her pretty head, he stopped abruptly and offered Miss Noel a dish she had already declined. He and Mr. Ramsay then got into a conversation about hunting and shooting, in which they talked very much at cross-purposes until they found out where the trouble was and defined their terms, Mr. Ramsay's red deer turning out to be Mr. Ketchum's elk; the European elk, the American moose; English thrushes, American robins; English grouse, American partridges; and so on. The other gentlemen were naturally attracted by topics so congenial, and a brisk discussion of guns, powder, shot, camp-life, Comanche-stalking, and the like, ensued that made Mr. Ramsay's eyes sparkle with interest. "How I should like a shy at one of those red devils!" he exclaimed. "I am going out to the far West, you know. I have come over to settle here, for a while at least."

"I am glad to hear that," said Job, who thought Mr. Ramsay looked the sort of man that ought always to be coming down the steps of the Guards' Club, and not a subduer of nature, a miner, herdsman, ranchero, pioneer, but did not feel called upon to express un-called-for opinions.

"Yes, Ramsay is tired of the dry-rot of an idle life in London, and is going to sit down out in the bush and wait for civilization where there is only a fortnightly post and he will be quite out of the reach of telegrams, six men sleeping in the same tent, and that kind of thing. Just so. It is a fascinating sort of life for a young man. I have tried it myself, but I like my comfortable arm-chair and my newspaper now. '*Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis*.' I envy the fellow tremendously, except when I am pitying him with all my heart," said Sir Robert, running one hand through his side-whiskers and gazing benevolently, with his head a little on one side, at Mr. Ramsay.

"I don't mind roughin' it. I like it,"

said Mr. Ramsay. "And I think I have brought everything that I shall need. I was afraid you'd think I was goin' to give you the pleasure of my company for the rest of my life when you saw what an awful lot of luggage I had brought; but it is only that I am goin' out into the backwoods, where I've heard fellows say there wasn't so much as a corkscrew to be had for love or money. I hoped you'd excuse me bringin' it."

"Certainly, certainly: the more you bring, and the longer you stay, the better I shall be pleased. But, if you will let me, I'd like to see your outfit. I have lived out there, and may be able to give you a hint or two," said Mr. Ketchum.

"Have you, now? I shall be delighted! I'll get into my Colorado rig after dinner and show you what I'm like. Splendid get-up! Not very nobby, you know, for the Park, but quite the thing," replied Mr. Ramsay beamingly.

Miss Noel meanwhile had a very full and agreeable chat with Mrs. Ketchum senior about gardening, and sewing, and other practical topics, and very much surprised that lady by her mastery of them, as well as by her pronunciation of a certain word which she rendered unmistakably as "coweumber." Mrs. Ketchum also noticed, this time with the most decided disapproval, that her left-hand neighbor was taking what she considered a scandalous amount of stimulant. Beer, sherry, champagne, claret, maraschino, and a *chasse-café* made up a total that she had never seen a woman dispose of before, and, although Mrs. Sykes tossed them off with entire nonchalance as she had her glass filled and refilled by the butler, and did not seem in the least affected by any or all of them, Mrs. Ketchum felt the most decided uneasiness about her, and was relieved when Mabel gave the signal and they all trooped back *en masse* to the drawing-room. Here Mrs. Sykes and Mrs. Vane got together on the sofa. Mrs. Vane was complimented on her "cleverness" in securing a son-in-law like Mr. Ketchum for a portionless daughter,

and, on truthfully disclaiming any share in the marriage, was playfully accused of being "deep, awfully deep." Some very searching inquiries were also made by Mrs. Sykes as to the amount of Mr. Ketchum's fortune and the position and means of every one in the household, and her astonishment on hearing of what he had done for Mrs. Vane alone was unbounded. "It will not last," she said. "I suppose it results from a temporary infatuation for Mabel's pretty face; but such an extraordinary state of things can't last." Mrs. Vane found just the audience she had long craved to appreciate her views of Fräulein's position in the house. "A fire to dress by, burning in her room *all day long*! Silk dresses given her! Spending all her evenings with the family! Allowed the use of the carriage when she chooses!—upon my word, I never heard anything like it in all my life!" said Mrs. Sykes. "Has she got any hold over him? An ugly secret of some kind, eh?" Poor Fräulein, who had shrunk up into a corner and was doing some of her interminable tatting, divined from Mrs. Sykes's scornful glances and short laughs that she was under discussion, and was shrivelling morally under the process, when Mr. Ketchum called out cheerily, "Why, Mother Schmidt, where have you got, off there in the cold?" and, getting up, placed an arm-chair for her near the fire.

Sir Robert was wandering aimlessly about the room, taking in the details of an international interior, turning over the books on the tables, the "Peerage" and "Who's who," some bound volumes of the "Penny Magazine," Miss Edgeworth's "Parent's Assistant," and similar works, "Tennyson's Poems," along with "Longfellow's Works," "Poe's Poems," the "Innocents Abroad," and a copy of the "Red Rover," on the fly-leaf of which was written, "Job Ketchum, from his devoted friend \$1.50," the "Morning Post" and the "Queen" jostling "Texas Siftings" and the New York dailies. The pictures and photographs, too, were eloquent of the two countries,—Mabel's father in his Ox-

ford cap and gown, and again "having tea on the lawn with dear mamma," as Mabel put it, "and the Rectory (gabled and ivy-festooned) in the background." "My cousin Guy Huddleston, taken just after he was gazetted." "Beatrice's baby that she sent home, taken with her Ayah." "Canon Ponsonby and the Bishop of Curds and Whey, both great friends of dear papa." "Husband when he was a little boy." (A most wonderful little boy, in very long trousers and a jacket that ended in the middle of his back, hair long and shiny, suggestive of Rowland's Macassar Oil, parted a little above the left ear, chubby hands clasped as if in prayer, eyes rolled up to watch, —considered "perfectly sweet" when taken.) "Husband at school, a half-grown lad." "Husband, taken the year he came of age." "Husband in the uniform of his military company." "Husband after typhoid fever,—a perfect libel upon him." "Husband, done last year in New York; not as handsome as he, but the best of all the likenesses." "Husband's father." (Preternaturally solemn and mortally ugly in the picture, but really a pleasant-faced, benign old gentleman.) "The ancestral home of Husband's people" (a square stone house of a dear old fashion, homely and human, with a devoted-couple-and-twelve-children expression about it, the living-house of a God-fearing, hard-working, rosy-cheeked, spinning, sleighing, snow-balling, apple-eating family, set in a grove of fine trees); and, underneath, a silhouette of "Husband's grandmother," a stately old lady, with a great deal of cap and a Roman nose. It is by no means certain that, if left to herself, Mabel would not have spoken of this planet, supposing her to have occasion to allude to it, as "Husband's world," and of Paradise as "the world to which Husband is going." Baby Ketchum was now brought in to bid good-night, and the ladies congregated about him admiringly.

"Such a dear boy!" said Miss Noel. "Mayn't I take him for a bit?" She held out her arms as she spoke, and was soon passing her hand gently over

his curls and cataloguing his charms. "Now let us see, childie, who you are like."

"Oh, *Husband!*" said Mabel decisively.

"Really a nice child, Mabel," commented Mrs. Sykes tepidly, regarding him from her seat on the sofa. "Good, fresh color, nice mottled legs. He looks healthy and as though he would not give trouble. What name have you given him?"

"Jared Ponsonby," said Mabel bravely, the ready color mounting to her cheeks.

Mrs. Sykes looked as though she had heard of an Irish Jew or a Japanese Presbyterian, but, for a world's wonder, she made no actual comment: she only arched her brows eloquently and expressed silently Sir Pertinax MacSycophant's "Such an admixture!"

Seeing that the child was getting restless, Miss Noel said, "Where are you going, and to whom? Mammy, daddy, or granny?" And the boy for answer slipped off her lap, and, running across the rug, clambered up on Fräulein's knee, where he was rapturously received with cries of "*Das herzlichste!*" his curly head being pressed against her heart, her broad German face beaming gratification at this little mark of preference.

Heartily was Job loved and honored by the Fräulein, and she loved and obeyed Mabel without reservation. But as for the child, she adored him, and was his abject slave, over whom he ran like a small ear of Juggernaut whenever he felt the need of motion. Unconscious of any sacrifice, and fully conscious of his power, he had a hook in her nose before he could walk, and ever after led her where he chose, accepted her devotion as his right, and repaid it with the careless regard which seems the portion of the too fond worshipper the world over. His grandmothers squabbled over him, corrected him, and in their way loved him, but it was "Frou" (as he called her) who might have been seen anxiously going through her Silurian hair-trunk in search of some fresh trifle to

please his royal highness, he standing by, overseeing the job, with her gold watch on and an aggravation of his father's restless energy. One grandmother—the American one—had been shocked by this talk of "Granny," and "Daddy," and "Mammy," titles which had only a cob-pipe and patchwork-quilt association for her, "vulgar terms that it amazed her to hear from the lips of an English lady," as she afterward told Mabel. There had been a family discussion about some other titles and what "Boy" should call his parents. Mabel disliked the American variations of an old theme as heard in "Mar," "Maw," "Mair" (short, with a bleat), "Marmar," "Mommer," and their correlatives "Par," "Paw," "Pair" (another bleat, if you please), "Parper," "Popper." She was in favor, "Husband" permitting, of Papá and Mamá, as being more or less in vogue in both countries. Mr. Ketchum objected to even this compromise. The grandmothers ranged themselves under one or other of these banners, did a good deal of sharpshooting, and would have liked nothing better than to keep the question on the hob for a year or two. Mr. Ketchum, however, decided that the original air should reappear for once, and "father" and "mother" became the earliest utterances of the boy, undergoing only the necessary—if temporary—modification of "farzy" and "mozzey."

But to return. Mr. Ketchum was prowling up and down the drawing-room, stopping occasionally to glance out at what remained of a beautiful sunset, when a ring came at the bell, and Sanford admitted a gentleman, who could be plainly seen through the open door divesting himself of his overcoat and hat. Mr. Ketchum recognized him and smiled. He had expected him to call, but not quite so promptly. Elsewhere he would probably have greeted him with a careless "How're you, Bates? How was the queen when you left Windsor Castle?" Or, "What did 'Wales' say in his last letter?" But, punctilious in his ideas of hospitality, he now advanced, shook hands heartily,

and presented him to the others. Mr. Bates was a tall man, whose figure was constructed on a few bold lines, as though he had been a towel-horse. Mr. Ketchum once said of him that when the workmen had finished building him they forgot to take down the scaffolding. He was dressed in the exaggeratedly British style, had an air of feeble gentlemanliness, and for the rest was rather a pronounced specimen of a not uncommon sort of snob. Heaven had denied him the boon he most coveted,—the happiness of being an Englishman; but an Englishman he had determined to be, in spite of the accident of birth. He lacked a great many gifts that a lesser soul would have thought indispensable to the rôle he proposed to play. His physique was not up to the mark, his tastes and habits and speech were formed, his voice was nasal, he had really nothing except his money and himself to depend upon,—yet mark the result. In a few short years he was more English than any Englishman in England,—such is the power of a resolute will. He was taken for one over and over again by Americans, who keep a portrait of John Bull hung up in their mental picture-galleries, just as John Bull does of his neighbor Johnny Crapaud and Monsieur Crapaud in his turn of Hans Schneider,—remarkably good likenesses all of them, of course, perfectly faithful, if not entirely flattering. Count D'Orsay once painted the picture of a friend and submitted it when finished to that friend's wife for criticism. "It is a good picture," was her verdict, "but not a good likeness." "Ah, madame," said the artist, "you see de beast," (meaning the best). We all see the beast in these national portraits, and do not greatly care about the likeness being preserved.

The English craze was only the last expression of a constitutional thirst for distinction that had long tormented Mr. Bates and had led him in the earlier stages of his career to talk only of the most fashionable people, and of these as his most intimate friends,—of their yachts, carriages, jewels, opera-boxes,

and enormous fortunes,—of the best hotels, where he invariably stayed,—of the best clubs, at which every one hastened to put him up,—of his tailor, Poole, and his boot-maker, Biffins, the best in Europe, though (with an uneasy laugh) “frightfully expensive,”—of his cigars, which Cubans thought superior to any they had ever smoked,—and his wines, which a well-known *bon vivant* of New York had pronounced the best he had ever found on this continent. There was so much sweetness and light in Mr. Bates’s accounts of himself at this period that it was doubtless only from the most charitable motives that society supplied the shadows in the brilliant picture and mitigated his else intolerable radiance by whispering that he was a simpleton and a bore and the son of a successful grocer in Tecumseh, Michigan.

The sight of so many English people was naturally refreshing to an exile like Mr. Bates, and he bestowed upon them the seven bendings, if not the nine knockings, with which Chinese dignitaries are saluted. Mrs. Sykes made him a present of a stare and took no further notice of him. Sir Robert divined the ass in the lion’s skin, but made himself agreeable as usual. Mr. Ketchum played with a paper-knife and contributed intermittently to the conversation, as did Ethel and Mr. Ramsay. As for Mabel, she had gone up to the nursery, and so missed hearing Mr. Bates tell the company that he had been “yahs and yahs abroad, and was perfectly devoted to England,” compare the climate, customs, and what not of the two countries, always to the disadvantage of his own, and round off every other sentence with a “Don’t *you* find it so?” to Sir Robert.

“I think this a most delightful, exhilarating climate. I wonder at your liking ours better: it is so notoriously bad that we spend half our time abusing it,” Sir Robert said in reply to one appeal.

But the visitor continued to set forth only the more plainly the impossibility of America’s ever proving a congenial

home to a Bates. Everything about it offended his exquisite sensibilities. It was “raw,” it was “cold,” it was “bare,” it was “frightfully new.” The grass, the skies, the architecture, all distilled torture upon this delicately-organized poet-soul. But the people,—last, worst, most unendurable and unescapable pang of all,—the people!

Mr. Ketchum broke his paper-knife as he listened, and as he threw the pieces aside he heard Mr. Bates saying, “Give me solid old England, I say,” and looked up, to see “*Que diable fait-il dans cette galère?*” written so legibly in Sir Robert’s honest English face that his vexation was replaced by amusement.

“Ah!” said Sir Robert, and the exclamation expressed something of the contempt he felt; “I should have thought, now, that you would have preferred your own country to any other; most people do.” Sir Robert would very probably have been bored by the American who is always insisting blatantly upon the absolute superiority of everything American; he would have understood the American who in speaking of his country shows the loving pride and enthusiasm that a son feels for his mother; but he utterly despised the creature who held in such light esteem that for which most men are ready to lay down their lives.

The conversation languished rather, except so far as Mr. Bates was concerned. Bent upon posing as a personage and a social authority, he rambled on inconsequently, chiefly about himself and his affairs, opinions, experiences, what he considered “good form” and knew to be “bad form,” of something that was “not the correct thing,” and something else that was “no longer fashionable,” and, finally, of some people who had bought a house near his whom he characterized as “low people,”—“tradespeople,” he believed, whom he should have nothing to do with, of course.

“Quite right, Bates,” said Mr. Ketchum. “You can’t afford to know everybody: it would be a ‘boah,’ as you say. But don’t be too hard on them.

We can't *all* be upper crust, you know ; somebody has got to be bed-rock. We aristocrats should remember that." And, having dived after Miss Noel's ball of wool, which had rolled toward him, he added, "Pretty sunset that for a new country, isn't it? I like that view that we get of the valley through the trees, there, better than any other in America. I say America because it sounds as though I had been all over the world and prevents my being identified with my own country, which is my great object in life."

At this Sir Robert and Mr. Ramsay laughed and exchanged glances, and Mrs. Ketchum, coming in, called for an *aide-de-camp*, as she meant to "turn out the tea that instant, but was not going to trot about with it,"—a summons which both Mr. Bates and Mr. Ramsay obeyed with alacrity.

"You go in tremendously for china, don't you?" Mr. Ramsay said, looking admiringly at the exquisite service before him and removing the crimson cosey that smothered the teapot. "Prettiest I ever saw, I think. Nice tone, and all-overish design."

"It is rather nice, isn't it?" said Mabel. "I often wish that I could go to China and prowling about the shops a bit, picking up things. You will take me some day, won't you?" (to her husband.) "It would be quite delightful."

"It would be; but the question that presents itself to the intelligent and reflective mind is, 'Where the mischief is the money to come from?' The inclemency of the times makes no impression on you, Mrs. Ketchum, whatever. China, indeed! Haven't you enough of that sort of thing yet? I assure you, Mr. Ramsay, that my wife's extravagance in this matter is only equalled by her parsimony. She is always buying china; but when we have no company I am made to eat my dinner off a tin plate on the back steps, to save wear and accidents. Ah, there is Brown; come just in time to save me from joining the noble company of cashiers in the woods.—Glad to see you, Brown."

"Husband does just so! The idea of his saying—" Mabel began, but had to go forward to receive Mr. Brown, his brother Mr. Albert Brown, and their maiden sister Miss Susan Brown. The last was a great friend of Fräulein Schmidt's, and joined her very soon; the brothers proceeded to make their compliments to the English ladies; Mr. Bates attached himself to Ethel; and Job and the baronet were left to their own devices for the moment.

"Is that the brother you dislike?" asked Sir Robert, nodding toward Mr. Albert Brown. "Not a pleasant face, certainly: receding forehead, protruding eyes, thin lips."

"Oh, it is not his personal pulchritude that I look at: it is his pellet of a soul. A dozen such would rattle in a mustard-seed," replied Mr. Ketchum, giving his chair an energetic hitch. "He is so mean that if you were to bait a trap with a postage-stamp you would catch Albert six nights out of seven every week in the year. He was very ill last winter,—said to be dying,—but the doctor held a nickel under his nose, I suppose, at the last moment, and brought him back again. Strange to say, Brown is no more like him than if he had never heard of him. His heart is as big as all out-doors. Streaky family,—like breakfast bacon. I have known them all my life, but I never could stand Albert; and I have never asked him to my house. He's no friend of mine, and I feel at liberty to express myself pretty freely about him. I wonder what brought him here to-night. Bug under that chip."

Sir Robert would willingly have stayed with his host for the remainder of the evening, but just as they had changed the topic of conversation and settled down into a comfortable talk about several things that interested him,—such as the wages of servants, agricultural laborers, and artisans in Michigan, the price of bread and cost of living, the advantage of the great lakes as a commercial highway, expense per bushel of transporting grain to England, and the merchant-marine of America,—Mabel joined them, and asked Sir Robert if he

would not play a game of whist with her mother for a partner and Mr. Brown and Miss Noel as his adversaries. Agreeing to this, he walked over and took his seat at the card-table, and was soon horrifying Mr. Brown by proposing to play for money,—only sixpenny points and “hardly an object,” as he explained when he found himself, to his great surprise, indirectly accused of gambling. “There isn’t a clergyman in England who wouldn’t do it,” he said; “but don’t let me undermine your principles over here,” and forthwith proceeded to give himself up to the game with immense gravity and such philosophy as he could command with a partner who revoked, trumped his aces, dropped her cards, talked across the board, announced what she had in her hand, never knew what the trump was, and had every other fault that a player possibly could have or that could infuriate a veteran member of a London whist-club.

As Mabel went back to her seat she heard Mrs. Sykes saying, “I can’t say that I care for American scenery: it seems to consist chiefly of St. Jacob’s Oil on rotting fences, and stony, badly-tilled fields, and weazly sheep or cows, with an occasional telegraph-pole thrown in. But still I am glad to have seen it. One *must* see America nowadays, or one is nobody. What do I think of this house? Oh, comfortable enough. The library is good, the pictures barely tolerable—”

What more fault she was about to find did not appear, for just then the door opened, and Mr. Ramsay came in, accoutred in the “rig” he had spoken of, and blushing furiously at the sight of the additions made to the party in his absence.

“The haughty Briton, as he appears in the famous rôle of ‘The Border Ruffian,’” called out Mr. Ketchum, laughing. “Come here, Ramsay, and let us have a look.”

Redder still, but radiating satisfaction through the veil of modesty, Mr. Ramsay joined his host on the hearth-rug and bore with entire good humor the general inspection that followed. He

was dressed in a flannel shirt, a pair of corduroy trousers, enormous jack-boots, and a cork helmet, was belted and spurred, carried a haversack, wore gauntlets that came nearly up to his elbow, had a kind of wire coop with a gauze net stretched over it attached to his helmet, and as to arms was a peripatetic arsenal. “Green of the Fusiliers got me up this,—he’s been out in Mexico a lot,—all but this,” touching the coop. “I got that up to get ahead of those brutes of mosquitoes,” he said, and glanced at himself in fond approval.

The sight was too much for Mr. Ketchum. He looked from the bristling, buccaneering Mr. Ramsay to the side-whiskered and generally Britished Mr. Bates standing a few paces off, and incontinently fled. Mabel followed him into the dining-room, and found him convulsed with laughter and fairly doubled up on the sofa. “What is the matter, husband? what is it?” she asked, seeing nothing to put anybody into such a state.

“Oh! It’s th-o—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—those two—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—those two *imitations!*” Mr. Ketchum got out, with great difficulty, and convulsed afresh, laughing until the tears rolled down his cheeks, to the no small amazement of his wife, who looked on quite anxiously at the demonstration. It was some moments before he could compose himself sufficiently to go back; and even then his features worked ominously, and he had the greatest difficulty in controlling his risibles.

Mr. Ramsay was still contemplating himself delightedly and talking of what he meant to do “out in Colorado and those parts.”

Gradually sobering down, Mr. Ketchum joined in the conversation, telling him that they would have a serious talk about the Colorado plan next day, and saying what he could for the “rig.” “You have been handed around on a rose-leaf all your life, my dear fellow. You’ll find it exchanged for a cactus out there,—the roughest sort of life, and human nature in its shirt-sleeves. If

you were not an Englishman, I should advise you either to go home again or invest in a quarter's worth of arsenic. You can't mine in hard-bake with a pewter spoon, you know. But I reckon you are made of the right metal and will come out ahead on that fight."

"I can't go home, you know. It is no good talking of that. I haven't got the money to live there, unless I turned mud-lark," said Mr. Ramsay. "The governor won't do anything for me, and I can't get tick, and I am obliged to try the colonies or America."

"Well, anything is better than being an English gentleman who can't keep up with the procession," said Mr. Ketchum; "and perhaps you may be the pigeon that is to pick up a pea."

After this there was some music, and then Sanford brought in the tray, with the materials on it for brewing what Mr. Ketchum called "the muriate of ausquate of iodized potassium."

Miss Brown refused to stay long enough to either see the deed done or partake of the contents of the flowing bowl, and the party broke up, Mr. Bates kindly assuring Sir Robert that he meant to see a great deal of him.

Good-nights were exchanged, and the front door closed.

"I hope Mr. Brown did not take my hat," said Sir Robert, and walked up to the rack to assure himself that such was the case. His eye fell upon a little pile of narrow pasteboard strips, on which was engraved, "Mr. Bates, 10 Chapel Street, Belgrave Square." Mr. Bates's cards always bore this strange device. "What an ass!" commented the baronet, with a frown of disgust on his face; and to this Mr. Ketchum added something emphatic that will not be set down here.

The "muriate" having been mixed on purely chemical and medicinal principles and imbibed from a strong sense of duty, they all took their bedroom candles, and were about to ascend the stairs, when Sir Robert suddenly stopped, and said to his host, "How am I to dress to-morrow? What shall I wear?" An embarrassing pause followed. "What are we going to do?" he added.

The English people present understood that, accustomed to the carefully-arranged programmes of visits at English country-places, Sir Robert expected that certain occupations and amusements, involving suitable preparations for the same, were to be his portion in America.

"Oh, dear, how shall we amuse him?" thought Mabel dolefully.

It was Job who came to the general rescue. "Wear what you please," he said. "America was invented for the express purpose of getting one place where people could wear out their old clothes and do as they pleased."

Sir Robert laughed, as did the others in chorus, they resumed their march, and in another moment had disappeared into their respective bedrooms.

"We will show Sir Robert our old castles and ruins to-morrow, and our cathedrals and abbeys the next day, and so on," said Mr. Ketchum to his wife. "Wasn't Ramsay a spectacle for gods and men? When I see a fellow like that come over here, Daisy,—and they are coming by the dozen,—fellows with the tastes and habits of millionaires and only such knowledge of life and people as is to be gained on the right side of English park-palings, trained to no profession or pursuit, as ignorant of business matters as our little child, and suddenly set down in one of our frontier communities, like the Babes in the Wood, I always feel like saying to them, 'May the Lord have mercy on your souls!' The homesickness, the strangeness of everything, the hardships, and the almost certain failure make up a row of stumps, I tell you; the stoniest sort of patch to plough with a crooked stick and a strange heifer."

"But why need they plough with a crooked stick, dear? It is very sad for the poor things," Mabel replied.

"What do you think of all this?" Mrs. Sykes was asking of Miss Noel, their rooms communicating and both ladies passing to and fro.

"I think it is all very nice,—very nice indeed. I am sure we have every comfort and luxury we could possibly desire; and the people are most obli-

ging, civil, and agreeable," replied Miss Noel.

"You are positively infatuated about the Americans," grumbled Mrs. Sykes from her room.

"Oh, no; nothing of the kind. But we are not likely to agree about them; and, as I am considerably tired with the fatigues of the day, I may as well close my door and take myself straight off to bed," said Miss Noel, shutting the door of argument as well as the one of oak.

The next day was Saturday, and by half-past six o'clock Miss Noel was up and out, getting three hours of walking and botanizing before breakfast, and coming in full of praises of the beautiful day, a basket of wild flowers on her arm.

Mrs. Sykes also rose early, and, having written a great number of letters, in which she gave very spicy accounts of "the way they do things in America," proceeded to make herself entirely at home, as Mr. Ketchum had urged her to do. There was a spare-room adjoining hers, into which she had her writing- and sketching- materials carried, and which she said would do very well for her boudoir during her visit. She made Parsons unpack her boxes first, instead of Miss Noel's. She had all her stockings collected that needed darning, and took them affably to "Schmidt," as she called *Fräulein*, telling her to "repair them neatly, Swiss fashion." She went on a grand prow about the house to see what it was like, in the course of which she got as far as the lumber-room in the garret, where a maid was packing away the surplus winter bedding; and, seeing the store-room door ajar, she marched in there, and was staring with lively interest at its wealth of "goodies," when Mabel entered, followed by the cook. Not disconcerted in the least, she said to Mabel, "What a larder you have got, to be sure! I suppose you are very contented living over here on the fat of the land."

"I am contented; but it is not because I am living on the fat of the land, as you call it," said Mabel coldly, and then went on to give directions to the

servant, which she purposely spun out until Mrs. Sykes took the hint and left.

Having exhausted her resources, Mrs. Sykes went out on the front veranda, where any amount of amusement awaited her in the person of "Hannibal Hamlin," the first little darky she had ever met. In a moment she was all rapture. "Oh, how delightfully black he is! How he shines! What comical bow-legs! Poke him up and make him laugh, or cry, or amuse me in some way, somebody. Pray put him down there in front of me, where I can see his eyes roll. Where did you get the comical creature? I never saw anything so delicious and intensely interesting."

"He is Washington's son," said Mr. Ketchum.

"Rummet pickanniny I ever saw," said Mr. Heathcote. "Friend of yours?" (to Mr. Ketchum.)

"Yes; a particular one. I took a fancy to him first because he looked so fresh from the cocoanut-tree; and he's as smart as they are made. Come here, Hannibal," said Mr. Ketchum. Fishing in his pocket, he pulled out a quarter, whistled a lively air, and fell to executing the motion known as "patting juber." Up sprang Hannibal, and, small as he was, danced a breakdown, as a pouter-pigeon inflates his breast, by sheer instinct. His grins, his bare brown legs, his tatters, the indescribable African swing that he put into the movement, delighted the spectators beyond measure. They laughed uproariously through the whole performance; and Ethel and Mr. Ramsay, having only got down in time to see the final shuffles and whirls, insisted on an encore. Miss Noel arrived in time for that, and it was received with as much enthusiasm as the first, even Sir Robert giving out a series of painfully obstructed snorts and chuckles that indicated his appreciation.

"Never saw such a little nigger; drollest specimen of a blackie possible," he said.

"Sh-sh! colored person, you mean. We are having our English history rewritten so as to bring out the figure of the Colored Prince properly," said Mr.

Ketchum. "Would you like to see him cut a few more capers?"

A general cry of "Oh, do!" and "That we should!" went up, and Mr. Ketchum began to whistle again. But he had reckoned without his Hannibal, who had thrown himself down on his back and declined to stir.

"I'se tired. Ain't gwine dance no mo'," he said.

Threats, temptations, cajolery, were tried in vain. The impudent and independent attitude of the child amused them almost as much as his dancing, but they could not understand how he dared refuse to obey Mr. Ketchum. They would have kept him spinning away for another hour, if he had not shown the caprice of the artist and strutted off with the funniest swaggering air while Mrs. Sykes was gone in search of her block and pencil, intending to sketch him. This she did later, in a great variety of attitudes; and during the remainder of their visit Hannibal was an unfailing source of interest.

Breakfast over, they nearly all returned to the veranda again,—the ladies bringing out their work, the gentlemen smoking and reading. Sir Robert and Job each had a pile of newspapers to look over, and effected an exchange from time to time of the English for the American, though of the latter Mrs. Sykes remarked, "I can't see what interest you can find in them. They are ill written and abusive, and the ridiculous vulgarity of the advertisements is very tiresome."

Sir Robert was a man who read every part of his paper; and, having mastered the contents of his copies of the "Times," "Standard," "Pall Mall Gazette," and "Guardian," he tackled some of the leading American dailies, and then some of the minor and more provincial sheets. It was a funny sight to see his expression as he wrestled with the allusions to the Chicago girl's foot, the Rig-Veda and baked-beans paragraphs about Boston, and such jokes as, "Mrs. Wills Hackett lit her new fire with coal-oil on the morning of the 23d of February: her clothes fit

the present Mrs. Hackett to a T;" or the refined pleasantry of such stories as, "'Yes, Adolphus, there is a terrible gap between us,' said Araminta, when her parlor young man gave a yawn at 1.30 A.M." Bewilderment gave place to a different emotion when he saw that a certain quack medicine was "reliable,—being what it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;" that "Jim Phelps" (vide a police report) "had blasphemed his Maker five dollars' worth;" also a verse from the Sermon on the Mount used to advertise a "Professor" of chiropody; and a leading article in which with much delicate editorial raillery the Queen of England and the Princess Louise were cruelly belittled by being called "Vic" and "Lou."

Mr. Ketchum, meanwhile, was enjoying the "Court Chronicle," in which "Her Majesty walked out on Friday morning attended by the Duchess of Bamborough," and evidently returned quite safely to luncheon, as the next paragraph proved: "Her Majesty drove in the afternoon, attended by the Duchess of Bamborough." He was revelling in the advertisements for "a serious cook," an "Evangelical footman," a housemaid to whom no "flounces or followers" would be permitted, "a young, musical, cheerful High-Church curate, with decided views on the eastward position, who would be expected to take two services on Sunday, train the choir-boys, and teach Latin, Greek, French, and the English branches in a school; graduate of Oxford preferred: £50," and of "Tomes & Dollop, wig-makers to all the crowned heads of Europe." He had got to "sermons for busy rectors, High, Low, or Broad, at 12/6 the dozen," when he heard an exclamation from Sir Robert, and, looking up, saw him clutching fiercely the "Columbia Eagle," his face brick-red with anger and excitement. "Look at this!" he cried: "this infamous, lying article about me!" He pushed the paper into Job's hands, who saw a long article chopped into short paragraphs and spiced with sensational head-lines: "*A Bloated Baronet!*" "*British Vampires and Land-*

Grabbers!" "*Millions of Acres Wrested from the American People!*" "*Congressional Legislation Needed!*" "*Rascally Earls and Bankrupt Dukes!*" The writer of the article was the reporter who had "interviewed" Sir Robert in Washington. He purported to give a verbatim account of that interview, and was very particular to state the kind of chair Sir Robert sat in, where his arm rested, his changes of position and expression. He painted the baronet's portrait in India ink, ridiculed and abused him in the most grossly personal and shameless fashion, invented for him an entire conversation containing his "views," motives, thoughts, and plans, and then took him as a text for a violent attack upon the Englishmen of rank who have bought extensive properties in this country. Not that a word was said about the purchase-money. It was stated that "the blue blood of England had produced nothing but rascals, sots, and libertines for the last two hundred years." A magnificent image of "free America stalking athwart the stage of English politics like Banquo's ghost, terrifying tyrants and inspiring serfs," was drawn. In connection with the well-known tendency of rats to leave a sinking ship, it was pointed out that "a number of so-called noblemen had come over here and gone to the virgin West, where they had wrung from the horny-handed sons of toil the blood-bought domain which constituted the sole inheritance of their children." And why? "*That they might plant the Upas-tree of aristocratic institutions upon the free soil of Columbia!*" While Mr. Ketchum read this veracious, dispassionate production, so creditable in every respect to American civilization, Sir Robert walked rapidly backward and forward and roared and raged in a pretty fury.

"Oh, these Americans! these Americans!" exclaimed Mrs. Sykes, and smiled hatefully.

Mr. Ketchum shot an angry glance at her, but addressed Sir Robert. "I shouldn't care a claco, if I were you,"

he said. "It is some fellow that would rather tell a lie on credit than the truth for cash, I guess. Nobody will attach any importance to it. Don't let it worry you." But Sir Robert was of a different opinion, and attached great importance to it. It was not only that it did not contain a word of truth, but that "the rights of others were involved, the public mind would be inflamed, it would lead to acts of spoliation." Mr. Ketchum would greatly oblige him by recommending "a respectable solicitor in Kalsing" whom he might consult and instruct to prosecute at once. Nothing would do but that he should have legal advice; and, after using every argument he could think of to dissuade him from this course, Mr. Ketchum agreed to drive him into town that afternoon.

The day was one of those warm lovely ones in early summer that are enough to draw the very nails out of a house, so that the ladies had lingered outside. There was nothing thunderous or electrical in the atmospheric conditions, but all the same it was destined to be a day of disturbances. His talk ended with Sir Robert, Mr. Ketchum walked back into the dining-room to give Sanford an order, and while there he was surprised to hear loud sounds coming from the hall. "Can my old ladies have locked horns?" he thought, and walked quickly back to see what was the matter. The matter was this. Shortly before the arrival of the English guests Mrs. Ketchum had lost a model housemaid, and had hired as a stop-gap an Irish girl of the genus Biddy, a hopeless incapable, with what the French call a *flamberge au vent* in the way of a temper. Mrs. Sykes noticed her, and promptly asked Mabel where she got "that flauntily-dressed sloven, with no idea of her position or duties, and positively flounced up to the waist." Thanks to mistress rather than maid, all had gone smoothly for a few days; but this morning the degrading task of polishing two grates and hanging up the cascades of tissue-papers that Mabel had made for fire-screens had been assigned to her, and her Milesian soul had utterly revolted at

the idea. So down she came to her mistress, and, with arms akimbo and face aflame, poured out a Niagara of impertinence and rebellion that utterly amazed the guests and made Mabel turn pale. Sir Robert, in the absence of Mr. Ketchum, was about to tell her that he would "give her in charge,"—a threat he would have found some difficulty in carrying out,—when Mr. Ketchum appeared on the scene and took such active measures that in fifteen minutes a scornfully erect female figure might have been seen sitting in a cart that was bowling out of the grounds *en route* to Kalsing.

Ten minutes later another interruption came that contrasted comically with the previous one. It was Parsons this time,—Parsons with her exaggerated deference and propriety of manner, saying, "If you please, mem, Master Bobo and Miss Blanche 'ave been fightin' that dreadful I could 'ardly separate 'em, and Master Bobo's h'ear is all tore and bleedin' frightful! What would you please to wish done about it? Will I bathe it with a little loo-warm water and h'arnica, if there's any hotted?"

This dreadful news sent both Miss Noel and Mrs. Sykes in-doors with cries of "Oh, my poor cat!" and "That beastly cat! To touch my dearest angel!" leaving a smiling company behind them, and one person—Mr. Ketchum—extravagantly merry.

"Parsons ought to be exhibited in all our towns and cities," he said. "'Miss Blanche! Master Bobo!' Moses in the bulrushes!" He was in full enjoyment of this, when some visitors were seen approaching. These proved to be some ladies from the neighborhood, one of them being Miss Bijou Brown. Miss Noel and Mrs. Sykes were sent for, and, reappearing, gave an account of the late fracas, each proying that the pet of the other was alone to blame. Bijou stayed some time, was extremely effusive and cordial to Miss Noel and Ethel, and, when she left, cast a good many quick, bright glances about her, which, being translated,—though she would never have admitted as much even to herself,—

meant that she had expected and hoped to see Mr. Ramsay, who chanced to be out of the way. A second batch of callers followed,—Dr. Rhodes, the Ketchums' family physician, and Governor Bunnell, from a neighboring State, a florid, fluent politician, who was staying with the doctor. Both gentlemen made an agreeable impression, and were urged by Mrs. Ketchum to stay to luncheon, but declined.

About two hours later the carriage came round, and Miss Noel, Mrs. Sykes, Sir Robert, and Mr. Ketchum started for Kalsing. Washington was instructed to take a certain route, that an especially fine view of the valley might be enjoyed; and they were about half-way when they saw quite a large crowd gathered at the cross-roads near a blacksmith's shop. As they approached, they saw the figure of a man uplifted above the rest, who seemed to be gesticulating wildly; a little nearer, and they could see him plainly.

"Pull up, Washington," called out Mr. Ketchum, and the carriage stopped.

"Dear, dear! *Can that be the governor-general?*" asked Miss Noel, hardly believing her own eyes. "What is he doing?"

"Ranting like a street-preacher, evidently," said Mrs. Sykes, but nobody paid much attention.

The governor was beginning the summer campaign that was to culminate at the polls in the autumn. He was a ready-witted man and a capital speaker. He knew how to interest his audience and keep them interested. He perfectly understood the art of turning interruptions of every kind to account. He knew how to tell a joke or story, and did not tell too many. He was affable, grave, satirical, jocose, statistical, by turns. He got off two Latin quotations that were not the less effective for not being understood. He fused the mass before him with his fervent oratory, and swept them along by the force of an eloquence not of the highest order indeed, but extremely effective for his purpose. The crowd roared and cheered with a will. Cries of "Give it

to 'em, Johnny!" "That's right! waltz into 'em, Jack!" "Hand 'em another!" rang out. Sir Robert listened with all his ears. Even the ladies caught the excitement, and for an hour the governor had the pleasure of printing his sentiments on the agricultural mind as plainly as if he had represented a mould and they so many pats of butter. Then he relapsed into private life, put on his coat, which had been laid aside, poured some water from a pitcher (standing on a keg in front of him) into a glass, drank it off, and scrambled down from the wagon in which he had been enthroned.

"Splendid, governor! splendid!" called out Mr. Ketchum. The governor bowed his acknowledgments, and Washington was told to drive on.

"A rattling good speech," said Sir Robert, and plunged into a discussion of the whole electoral system of America, that gave Mrs. Sykes no chance to express her views then. Demosthenes could not have excited her admiration or retained her respect in the governor's place; and her asides to Miss Noel were so contemptuous that it was a lucky thing that they were not overheard by her host.

"It was a clever speech," said Miss Noel,—"Robert says that; but I can't think why he took off his coat. So dreadfully improper! And the wagon and that. Why didn't he take up his quarters at an inn, and have committees and all that, and speak from a balcony, I wonder? He certainly is not supported by anybody. The principal gentlemen of Kalsing and county-people must be in favor of the opposite party. I fear he must be a sad Radical. They call him 'Jack,' as if one of themselves!"

Arrived at Kalsing, the ladies did a little shopping and Sir Robert secured a lawyer. He also saw while in that part of the town a notice affixed to a door that caused him to stare very hard for a moment and then laugh outright. It bore this legend every day at the same hour: "Gone to dinner. Be back in ten minutes." "Ten minutes for *dinner*, by

George!" he mentally exclaimed, and drove back to a good dinner of his own, over which he spent so many hours that poor Mr. Ketchum, forbidden by his wife to leave the table, wriggled about on his chair as if impaled.

That evening no one came except Mr. Price and his sister, an extremely vivacious and soulful, not to say silly, young woman, who, considering how little there was in her to express, contrived to throw an astonishing amount of expression into a pair of large brown eyes. By an amusing chance, Mr. Price undertook to talk to Mrs. Sykes; and if ever Greek met Greek it was on that occasion. They mutually plied each other with questions until they were both exhausted, and then parted with a hearty mutual dislike. His *first*, to put it in charade form, was, "Pleasant journey out here? Scalper's ticket or regular one?" and the information she gleaned from him about railway-tickets alone ought to have made her more lenient in her judgment of him, especially as she made it the basis of a settlement with Sir Robert a few days later when they went over their accounts for travelling expenses, and she refused to pay for any but a scalper's ticket from New York to Kalsing, on the ground that Sir Robert ought to have managed better and not have put her to "unnecessary expense." She ungratefully spoke of Mr. Price as "an inquisitive little beast," however, and he said of her that she could ask more questions than anybody he had ever met since he was born, and was "eaten up with curiosity." "Asking me who Mr. Ketchum was, and what he is worth, and whether they knew many nice people, and a hundred things," he said. "I hate a curious woman. I've got no use for them." Nor had he.

Meanwhile, Miss Price rattled on and on, and rolled her entire eyeballs at Mr. Ramsay, who, having had a tiff with Ethel that afternoon, was obliged to fall back on Miss Price for amusement. This she afforded; and after a long *tête-à-tête* she rose to make her adieux, clapping her hands breezily in his face by

way of impressing on him that he had promised to come and see her, and assuring him that she would be "perfectly desperate" if he didn't come. She then said good-by to Miss Noel in her own peculiar fashion. She took her hand, shot a glance of almost tragic emotion not so much at as into Miss Noel, and murmured, "So glad to have met you! So glad! Let me kiss you, won't you? I pine to kiss the cousin of a duke." Without waiting for an answer, which Miss Noel was too much taken aback to give, she saluted that lady, and, still holding her hand, shot a glance expressive of a heart-rending pang of separation at Mrs. Sykes, and murmured, "So glad to have met you, too! Charmed. You will come and see me, too, will you not? Say that you will."

"I will, if I can manage it conveniently, and if I can't I won't," said Mrs. Sykes. "You had best not look for me: it is hardly probable that I shall have time to return visits."

"So sorry,—so very sorry!" said Miss Price, more deeply expressive of irreparable loss than ever, and taking her

hand lingeringly. In this way she made her sentimental rounds, Mr. Ketchum looking on impatiently the while.

When at last she was safely outside the front door, he came back, sank into a chair, rolled his eyes up to the ceiling, and exclaimed, "For this and all thy mercies, yours respectfully," in a way that brought down the house.

Even Mrs. Sykes condescended to laugh. "Really, now, you have an odd, striking way of saying a thing sometimes. You have, really," she said, and was surprised that he did not seem more gratified by her commendation. "I have been amused two or three times myself," she added, in a tone of good-humored patronage.

"No! Have you? Kyind heaven, thou art merciful and hast gratified my highest earthly ambition!" cried Job, striking a stage-attitude.

"Husband, will you see that the gas is not left burning in the butler's pantry all night?" said Mabel. "It is such a waste."

F. C. BAYLOR.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



KEEFE BARTLETT AND EDITH. Page 438.

ONLY GIRLS.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

CHAPTER I.

THE devil had entered into Keefe Bartlett's soul that day; and Keefe had not said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." On the contrary, he had provided wide room and hospitable entertainment; and the devil had not been slow to make himself at home in the inn which he found in Keefe's soul. For that matter, I suspect he never is anywhere.

These facts certainly do not make a happy introduction for Keefe; yet, bad as they are, there is something to be said for him. He had just rounded the point of his seventeenth birthday, and what a world it had been to him! Such a hard, pinched, cruel face as had been

turned towards him from the beginning! Yet it was the very same world which you and I know is full of green fields, and laughter of golden daisies, and birds with bubbling sweetness of song, and, better than all, full of great, warm, soft hearts, and blessed helping hands, which make it God's dear, beautiful, happy world, despite the sin and the misery.

But the sin and the misery had fallen to Keefe's lot. Yet his history is not an uncommon one — more's the pity! If it were something quite out of the ordinary run of things, I should not think it worth writing to-day.

Keefe found himself stranded helpless upon the world before he had mounted his eighth birthday. His father, mate of a merchant vessel, with plenty of native shrewdness and ability, had undermined his constitution by frequent spree, when he was in foreign ports,

and at last died in a drunken brawl in Buenos Ayres.

Keefe's mother, a small, worn, sallow-complexioned woman, took her husband's place at the family helm for a couple of years, which means, dropping all metaphor, went out to daily house-cleaning, and kept herself and her son from starvation, and that was about all.

The work-woman took cold one day. Exposure and privation aggravated the disease which at first did not seem serious, and she went out of life in a swift consumption, and Keefe was left in the world with his eight birthdays, and his hungry little stomach, and his small fists, to fight his way into boyhood, without a solitary friend or a single dollar.

He did what he could. Biped or quadruped, the instinct of life is strong. He fought off that old hungry, mouthful wolf of poverty, inch by inch, as shoe-black, horse-currer, news-boy, by turns; and so, with shoes out at the toes, and ragged coats, and a stomach whose normal condition seemed one of craving a good warm dinner, he managed somehow to keep soul and body together, up to that day when the devil entered into Keefe Bartlett.

Two days before, he, with a number of the hands, had been turned off from the Agawam Cotton Mills, a dull season rendering a reduction of the working-corps necessary.

Keefe had been employed at one of the looms about three months — on the whole the happiest of his life. He had steady employment and sufficient food; clean country air, too, which was something to one whose lungs had been half starved in the close, crowded atmosphere of city lanes and alleys.

Agawam was a small manufacturing town lying off the main arteries of railroads, with which it was connected by a branch line. It was a drowsy, picturesque old place, some two hundred miles from New York. Its large water-power had attracted some enterprising capitalists, and the old farming town had of late burgeoned into a flaming prosperity. Its mills gave work to hundreds of employees, and its quiet old farm-houses afforded shelter to swarms of city people, who alighted here every summer for the tonic of the air, and the great, still, restful greenery of woods and fields.

Some thirst and longing for these had got into Keefe Bartlett's blood that summer, chafing and stinging him night and day. The dark, sweltering, noisome alleys, the thud and roar of the great city, deafened and sickened him as it had never done before. He panted

for breadth and freedom, as wild animals do shut up in iron-barred cages.

He rushed away from all these at last, a good deal as a wild animal might do. He had only his hands and feet; and whatever native pluck there was in him, and whatever shrewdness his education in the city purlieus had developed, to clear a place for himself in the new world of the country.

Keefe had made his way to Agawam. When he left New York he had no goal in view, hardly any purpose beyond getting away from the hot alleys and the crowded streets. But he had followed the railroads, and slept under the trees at night, which was no hardship for one who had made his bed in the back yards of old warehouses and under piles of lumber, and dragged his chilled, stiffened limbs out in the morning, with the thermometer at zero. So at last, when his feet were blistered, and his pockets emptied of their last copper, he heard of the Agawam Cotton Mills, and of employment there for a few extra hands. It was only another day's pull for the tired, blistered feet, and Keefe reached Agawam, which opened into Arcadia for him when he found work in the cotton mills; and — You know the rest, until that day when, as I have told you, the devil came and found the door open, and whisked swiftly into the soul of Keefe Bartlett.

It happened in this wise: The morning after he had been turned off he was hanging about the factories, partly from habit, partly from a clinging fondness for the old place, when one of the partners came up to the office, which supplemented one side of the building near the corner where Keefe was standing idly, his hands in his pockets, and a dull, hopeless look on his heavy face, which did not improve it.

The partner, however, did not notice Keefe standing there, a little in the shadow around the corner. If he had, it would have made no difference: the boy would only have been one of "the hands" to the sharp, bustling, prosperous manufacturer — useful when he could be put to service; when he could not, to be turned off, like any worn-out beast of burden: not a bad man, either — urbane, hospitable, jocose, in his own house.

"Only," taking, slowly, his Havana out of his mouth, while the smoke hung in little cloudy circles around the handsome iron-gray beard, "you cannot take religion and philanthropy into business — no, sir."

The head proprietor was not alone this morning. He was accompanied by his nephew, a

slender, shapely youth, a junior, who had run down to Agawam for a few days, to sniff the mountain air, and boat, and ride horseback, and play croquet with his pretty cousin, Edith Folger, who, falling behind him a birthday or two, had not yet surmounted the equatorial line of her teens.

This was the talk which Keefe Bartlett overheard that morning standing in the shadow by the corner of the brick factory. It never once occurred to him that he was listening. If it had he would probably have seen nothing to be ashamed of in that act. His education had hardly been of the sort to make his moral susceptibilities very keen.

"Uncle Bryant, I want some money."

"I've no doubt of it, Rox" (this name being a happy elision of his mother's maiden one — Rochfox). "It's a chronic want with young fellows like you," meanwhile fumbling in his pocket for the office key. "How much do you want now?"

"O, a couple of hundred will carry me over until I get back to town. You know I'm good for that amount."

"I hadn't thought of it in that light, Rox," with a pleasant laugh. "You shall have the money, of course. I'll get it for you as soon as the bank opens. Will that do?"

"Perfectly, thank you. Indeed, I shall have no use for the money to-day, as I am off on a lark with Edith this morning."

"That foolish picnic business; yes, I remember. You shall have the money to-morrow. But what was all that talk at breakfast about your starting for the city? You'd better stay at least a fortnight longer."

"Thank you, sir. Nothing would delight me more. But I'm bound for a rough-and-tumble with some chums among the Adirondacks. I must set off to-morrow, rain or shine, to join my party."

"Sorry to hear it, Rox. We shall all miss you, especially Edith. Some wretched business will take me away from home to-night; but I will bring over the money at dinner, and, in case you are not there, leave it in my desk. You'll find it in an envelope addressed to you."

"Thank you again, uncle Bryant. I shall have no use for the money, as I said, until to-morrow afternoon, when I turn my back on this Arcadia of old Agawam; so, if you are to be absent, I may not see you again. Shall we say good by? I half hate the word. Good, round, flavorful old Saxon as it is, it leaves a little bitter tang in one's mouth, or thoughts."

"Don't say it, then, my boy. But I shall see you again. The train doesn't leave until five o'clock. I expect to be home by that time."

"I mean to foot the first fifteen miles, though, and must set out early. I must get my limbs in training for the Adirondacks, you see."

The elder man laughed, and looked at his nephew, half amused, and yet with a touch of sadness, although Bryant Folger was not given to sentimentalizing over anything in the earth or the heavens above it.

"Ah, Rox," he said, "it's a capital thing to be a young fellow, with sound health, and plenty of money to spend, and not a care in the world. Youth flies, my boy, like Phaeton's steeds. You must make hay while the sun shines."

"I am doing my best at it, uncle Bryant," answered the young man. "Don't I expect a jolly old time at the Adirondacks, camping out, taking big hauls of trout, and bringing down heaps of birds, and a fat deer occasionally!"

"Well, good luck to you, Rox. Look out for your neck. Your talk almost stirs my old blood with a hankering for a gun and a powder-pouch, a fishing-line, and the wilderness."

"Cut business and civilization for once, and come along with us, uncle."

The elder man made a slight but significant gesture towards the mass of dull-red buildings, which stared back at him with their long rows of windows, grim and remorseless as that old desert Sphinx we are forever hearing about. No words could have supplemented that gesture with any deeper meanings.

The most practical people are exquisitely dramatic once in a while, as was, for one instant, the head partner of the Agawam cotton works.

"Good by, and good luck to you, Rox."

The two men shook hands, the elder turning into his office, the younger going down the road, humming some notes of a German air he had heard at the last opera, with a crispness and sparkle all through them, like the drops of dew not yet dried from the wilted grass by the road-side.

All this time the figure in the corner by the office — a small stone addition which had been recently added to the main building — had not stirred. It had overheard every word of the conversation which had just transpired. It came out now and looked after the youth, going up the road with his careless, janty air, an easy, half-dominant grace in every movement, like that of one quite assured of his

place in the world, and who felt that the best things in it—the cake and the wine—were his birthright share. The coarser part of the feast—the bread and the cold meat—might fall to other lots and welcome.

Look at Keefe Bartlett as he stands there, staring at that slender, graceful figure going up the road. He is not of that mould himself, being heavily built, with a slouch in his shoulders, and coarse, large hands, square, big features, with a tanned, pimply skin, lightish, bristly hair, the shade of leaves that have bleached all winter under the snows; thick light eyebrows, too, and eyes that have a shrewd gleam in them: once get a fair look there, you set a different value afterwards on the dull, heavy features.

The "turned-off hand" wears a suit of gray, coarse clothes—the best he ever had in his life. He has earned them since he came to Agawam. Since he came here, too, a great many strange thoughts have been working under the bristly hair. Keefe has listened to the questions astir in his brain, and all the steady whir and thud of the factory wheels could not drown them. He wonders what these differences in human lots mean; why all the hunger, and cold, and want, the starved, miserable childhood, should have fallen to him, and the warmed, spiced fragrance to others.

He has brooded over it by night and by day. A bitter sense of wrong and outrage has taken possession of him more and more. He has a feeling of bitterness towards all rich men, as though they had robbed him of his birthright, and gloats sometimes over the thought that a day of reckoning is to come, he cannot tell when or how; but it is to be a day of triumph for labor and poverty, when the rich shall no longer grind the poor under their iron heel.

Keefe talks over this matter more or less with the workmen, when they hang, in the hot summer evenings, about the piazza of the big factory boarding-house down in the hollow. Not a very attractive place, certainly, but a palace in comparison with Keefe's former homes.

The boy is rather a favorite with the hands. He has a knack at acting, and entertains his companions with comic shows of scenes he has witnessed in the alleys and by-streets of that great Babel, two hundred miles south of Agawam—scenes not delicate or refined, perhaps, but touched all through with some strong, native, human life.

Keefe is always sure of an audience that

would have made a study for Hogarth—an audience with clay pipes, and loud guffaws, and admiring oaths, when he transforms himself into some street brawler, or shoe-black, or drunken sailor.

One of the workmen has assured the boy his vocation was the clown of a circus, and another has recommended the Bowery Theatre; after a while he "might make a big thing at the comic parts."

But Keefe had made no plans for the future when he was turned off from the place where, to his credit, considering his previous vagabond life and habits, he had worked steadily all summer. He had not money to pay his board for another week, and the winter was coming; and the outlook was gloomy enough.

Keefe thrust his hands into his pockets, and strode away from the factory office that morning, with the talk which he had overheard at work in his brain, and his thoughts swelling in a great bitterness against the speakers, especially against the young man just about his own age, who had wealth, and pleasure, and friends at command; who had only to ask for a couple of hundred dollars, and lo! it was rained down upon him much as the clouds rained down their showers upon the thirsty grass.

And here was Keefe, without a dollar in the world, and with the old freezing and starvation he knew so well waiting for him a little way off! And to-morrow, with his two hundred dollars stowed away in his pocket, and his careless, janty air, which seemed an insulting defiance to Keefe, this youth would start all alone to walk over the road to the station at Plum Forks, the road by which Keefe had come to Agawam, and which he knew so well. And while his thoughts kept revolving around this central fact, all of a sudden, and so slyly that he did not know it, the devil entered into the soul of Keefe Bartlett.

A mood half fierce, half sullen, possessed him now. "What right had that 'Rox,'" Keefe kept asking himself, "to this two hundred dollars, which he was going to squander in gay carousals, with companions as lazy and lucky as himself, among the mountains? Those delicate fingers of his had never earned a dinner or a night's lodging;" and then Keefe drew his hard, big hands out of his pockets, and stared at them with a smile fierce, bitter enough.

The boy wandered off by himself. His black thoughts were company enough for that day; and all the while he kept seeing, as in a vision, the slender figure moving rapidly along

the track, with its careless, janty air. That would all be to-morrow. Keefe had taken in and remembered all the points of the journey. Rox would have to start about one o'clock in order to reach the down train in time. There were long, lonely stretches on the road. Keefe knew them; he knew, too, that he had twice the muscular power of the delicately-bred student, for his vagrant life had toughened his naturally hardy constitution.

Keefe was not without weapons, too; he remembered now the pistol he had bought, for a mere song, of one of the workmen, in order to shoot muskrats. Not that he meant to use that, — a cold sweat actually started all over him, — of course not; but then how easy it would be, for any one who knew what Keefe did, to follow the young student, and come upon him suddenly from behind, in some lonely place on that long stretch of road, deal the fellow a blow that would knock sense and sight out of him for a few minutes, and then rob him of that two hundred dollars, to which he had no right!

You may be sure, when such thoughts as these stirred in Keefe's soul, the devil was not far behind them. Keefe had had a conscience, not a very sensitive one, of course, with his education of old wharves and back alleys; still, he had always had the name of keeping his word among his brother boot-blacks and news-boys — some memory of the pinched, sallow-faced little woman, who had gone to her grave so many years before, holding him back from committing any act which the world agrees to call crime, even when the temptation had been very sharp.

Even to-day he thought of her sometimes; but he was hunted, maddened by disappointment, misery, and a burning sense of wrong; and all day long he kept brooding over the solitary, rapid young figure, on the lonely road, and seeing the two hundred dollars stowed away in his wallet. An evil glitter came into the boy's eyes, and it grew and grew there, until the whole face beneath seemed to grow heavy and brutal.

Keefe gloated over that money; his very blood hankered and tingled for it; and at last, after wandering that whole day among the highways and over the country roads, when the sun shot up one wide purple splendor over the distant hills around Agawam, Keefe set his big jaws together, and, with an awful look darkling all over his face, swore that he would have the two hundred dollars.

And the devil, sitting in Keefe's soul, laughed to himself.

"WHY, Rox, you are the most unaccountable being! How in the world did you contrive to drop down here in this fashion?"

She came in from the garden, where she had been gathering flowers — honeysuckle, pinks, jessamine, and sweet, fresh, dainty things of that sort, and found him stretched upon one of the lounges in the sitting-room in his usual careless fashion, only, whatever attitude Rox Coventry took, it was never awkward or angular.

Rox was Edith Folger's own cousin, and she adored him. He stood to her in the place of the brother who had died just within the border-land of her memory, while the remoter relation gave just a relishing spice of romance to their feeling for each other.

To say that Edith was a fairer flower than any of those fragrant, blossoming things she brought in with her, would be as true as commonplace. She had a wonderfully sweet face, with big, dusky blue eyes, and glossy hair, with a slicker in it like bright live things, and a little tremulous flush in her cheeks; and her smile, — well, of all the sweet things about Edith Folger, I think that smile was the sweetest.

As for the rest, she was an only child, her father's pet and darling, especially since her mother died.

"Perhaps I dropped down from the clouds, perhaps I came in on some dainty Ariel's back. Don't you know by this time I am not made of common clay, and can navigate earth or air in ways quite unknown to ordinary mortals?"

Edith's laugh slipped out, a fresh, silvery thing enough.

"I am ready to believe almost anything about you, Rox; but that statement is too large; I cannot swallow it."

"Well, you needn't. I walked in like any other human biped, after a splendid swim, to ask for some lunch, and to tell you I must be off in half an hour."

"Half an hour!" tossing her flowers on the table with so hurried a movement that some of them were scattered on the carpet. "O, Rox, I hoped you had given up that frantic notion of walking over to Plum Point Station."

"Frantic! Why, child, it is a most sensible and practical conclusion on my part. I need a little breathing for the Adirondacks, you know. Now, be the angel you always are, and order my lunch at once, and help me eat it, for I must devour it and really be off in half an hour."

"There is nothing to be done, then, but to let you have your own way, I suppose." And she went and touched the bell a little gravely. "What will you have?"

"O, a leg of cold chicken, some sandwiches, and, to top off with, a glass of fresh cream and some berries."

It was evident that Rox was quite at home at his uncle Bryant's.

There was some more light, prankish talk between the two, with little silvery laughers of Edith's between, and an occasional burst from Rox, and then the servant who had received the girl's order brought in the lunch, and the two had it in a pretty little alcove on one side of the big room.

"This is just delectable, Edith," exclaimed Rox, as he piled the girl's plate with raspberries which had not yet lost the fresh coolness of morning dews, in which they had hung two hours before. "I pity the poor fellows who haven't cousins to eat lunches with them."

Edith would usually have been awake to the flavor of compliment in this remark. She had her little vanities, and liked to be praised, as all girls do; but she only smiled faintly as she took her saucer of berries, and actually looked grave for a moment before she said, —

"There are so many people in the world who are to be pitied, Rox!"

"I've no doubt of it," helping himself to the cold chicken with a serene contentedness, such as one could fancy the gods might feel at some banquet, talking over the troubles of mortals.

Perhaps Edith thought something of this kind as she watched her cousin — for she had thoughts behind that pretty face of hers. In a minute Rox looked up from his plate. It was evident that no speculations on human affairs disturbed the appetite which he had brought in from his swim that morning.

"What kind of people were you thinking of, Edith?"

"All sorts of folks who are in trouble and can't see their way out of it."

"They're a pretty huge lump, Edith," exclaimed Rox, cheerfully. Don't think, now, he was hard and selfish; he was only careless and thoughtless; but he had a real soft place in his heart, if one could get down to it. "What's put them into your head now?"

"I don't know, unless it was something which happened while I was gathering the flowers, just before you came in."

"Come, let's have it, Edith."

"It was very curious. I was way off in the corner by the hedge, hunting for some feathery greens to finish up my flowers, when all

of a sudden — I really can't tell whether I saw him first — I knew somebody was watching me outside. There he was, when I turned round and looked, sitting on the grass, a big, broad-shouldered fellow, in a coarse gray suit, and a square, coarse, homely face under a bit of a skull-cap. He was looking at me with a steady, curious gaze, out of such strange eyes! I can't tell what the look meant: but there was some pain or mystery in it. There he sat, staring at me, like some old roughly-hewn statue."

"He'd no business there," exclaimed Rox, with a slight growl.

"Perhaps not. He turned his eyes away when ours met; and yet, when I looked again, there the figure sat, watching me with the indescribable look. It gave me a curious feeling; and I was turning to go away, when my curiosity got the better of me, and I just determined the fellow should speak to me; so I faced right about, and asked what came into my mind first."

"Are you in want of anybody or anything?"

"Bravo, Edith! That was like you," broke in Rox.

"He seemed startled and confused at first."

"No; I don't want anything," he answered, in a hurried way.

"I turned to go. I can't tell what made me stop and ask the next question; but I did."

"Is there anything in the world you want? anything I can do for you?"

"He stared at me a moment before he spoke."

"I should like twenty-five dollars," he said."

"Well, that was cool," broke in Rox again, who by this time was a good deal interested in Edith's story.

"I thought so. If he had asked me for a dollar, or even two of them, I would have got it for him; but twenty-five was, of course, not to be thought of. It struck me all of a sudden that the fellow might be crazy. I should have run off then, for certain, if the hedge had not been between us. I told him I could not give him anything like that; and then, feeling that he might possibly be hungry, I added, —

"But I will bring you something to eat."

"If you had seen the bitter, angry smile that came into his face!

"I ain't a beggar," he said, roughly; 'I don't want any of your cold pieces!'"

"The brute!" exclaimed Rox. "I dare say he was prowling round for a chance to help himself."

"I don't think a real beggar would have acted like that," answered Edith. "At any

rate, I told him I had not supposed he was one, and that he must excuse me."

"You did?" said Rox, with an amused smile.

"Yes; for I was afraid I had hurt his feelings. His whole face lightened and changed after that.

"'You must excuse me, too,' he said, a good deal like a gentleman. 'I didn't expect you would give me the money. The words came out themselves;' and he turned at that and went off.

"Wasn't it all very curious, Rox?"

"Hugely so. Fellow either crack-brained or a rogue. Bet you my new gold watch on that."

"I cannot feel that he was either," answered Edith, with a little grave shake of her glossy head. "Something, Rox, I can't tell what, makes me feel that twenty-five dollars was really a matter of life and death to that boy; that he wanted it, as you and I have sometimes in our lives wanted something, and for which we would have given all the rest of the world."

"Ah, Edith, all that comes of your being such a sensitive, soft-hearted little puss. When you get to be as old as I am,"—here Rox bridled a little, and wiped his budding mustache with an air,—“you will learn that it doesn't do to trust too far to one's impressions."

"Perhaps," said Edith, rather meekly and rather sceptically. "But, Rox, you did not see what I did—the look in that boy's eyes. It meant some dreadful trouble."

Perhaps Rox was slightly impressed by Edith's story. However, he shook the feeling off easily, as ducks do water, and good-naturedly set himself to work to brighten up Edith.

"Whatever it was, you and I are not responsible, and it will do no good to bother your sensitive little soul over it."

By this time the lunch was finished. They had both left the table, and the girl was looking out of the window, while Rox, restless as usual, had taken to long strides up and down the room.

"It puzzles me," said Edith, half to herself.

"What?" asked Rox, coming over to her side.

"Why God hasn't made things better than they are."

He smiled a little at that. Her words always went, sabre-like, with clean, smooth stroke to the core of a thing.

"Philosophers and theologians have been

asking that question ever since the world was made. It's a great boggle, dear. Don't fret over it."

"But how can one help doing it, Rox? All the plums and the cake falling to our share, and such dry crumbs to the others—the bigger half, too."

"I know it. Sorry for 'em, poor souls. But I'm not Atlas: I don't carry the world on my shoulders."

"It seems as though God must love us better than he does them. But, as he is God, he cannot do that, Rox."

"You are right there, Edith. I shouldn't like to believe the other of him, even though the love was on our side. But you forget that the difference is not mostly his making. It is the fault of the people themselves."

"There is a great deal in that, I know, Rox. Yet so many of these people have not had a chance!"

"Somebody's fault too, may be, in the long run. Things sometimes take generations to work themselves out. But, Edith, if you go on shooting those hard bullets of theology at me, I shall never reach Plum Point Station. I must be off straightway. Clear up your face and bid me a good by that I shall carry over the fifteen miles of road."

"O, Rox, what a big goose you are making of yourself to take this awful tramp! But, as you will do it, good by, and God-speed."

She gave him both her hands. He took the soft white things a moment, and kissed the fair cheek with brotherly, cousinly freedom. She stood in the front door and watched him go his way through the dark larches and cedars, until at last he reached the gate, and turning there, lifted his hat to her, and went his way.

Somebody else watched him, too. It was the boy whom Edith had seen that morning sitting by the hedge, and who had haunted her ever since.

At some distance from the girl's residence was a small hillock, on which grew some gnarled, half-withered apple trees. Under their shadow the boy had been crouched for the last hour, watching the road, of which his position commanded a view. From his hiding-place the boy saw the light, alert figure going down to the track. A few minutes afterwards he, too, crept out and followed Rox Coventry.

About three miles from Agawam the track ran for some distance through a kind of hollow formed by low, wooded hills on either side. There was no more lonely place than this on the whole road, which, twelve miles below,

joined the main track at Plum Point Station.

It was about three o'clock as Rox Coventry reached the hollow. He remembered the time afterwards, because he happened to take out his watch and look at it. The place, as I said, was lonely enough; a narrow, tunnel-like perspective between the hills; not a house in sight.

Rox was no coward. He had walked the three miles briskly; had been humming college tunes and making all sorts of plans for the grand "lark" among the Adirondacks; and sometimes his last talk with his cousin Edith had pushed in among the other things, and made a little grave background to them. The afternoon was soft and still, one of those when the year seems to hold her breath, and turn her head to listen, as though she caught some hint of frosts and change that were coming. Soft, low clouds hung all over the sky, of a clear pearly gray; a hum of insects everywhere, and dreamings of winds among the leaves.

Suddenly Rox Coventry heard steps close behind him. He had always had remarkably keen ears. It flashed across him then, for the first time, that the road was lonely, and that he had brought no weapons with him. He turned suddenly, and encountered a figure only a few feet from him, and evidently approaching stealthily; a figure in gray, slouching, heavily-built, with a square, heavy face, too, the jaws set grim and hard, the expression just now dark and evil enough; but of this last Rox did not get the full force, for, as he turned sharply about, a startled, guilty look broke up every other in the boy's face.

Rox's glance going over the figure recognized it at once as identical with Edith's description. Had not this been the case, there was something so suspicious in the stranger's whole appearance at that moment that it must have struck Rox.

But it never once occurred to him that this stealthy approach and this singular attitude must mean something sinister. He never even suspected that the stranger had been silently following him all the way from Agawam. He only thought it was a curious kind of chance which had brought him face to face with Edith's description.

The two stood in the road, the soft yellowish lights from the clouds upon them, the dark hollow stretching beyond. The contrast between the two was worthy an artist—that big, slouching, rather overgrown figure, and the slender, well-shaped student, instinct with a

certain grace, even in repose: the difference that between a dray-horse and some high-bred courser.

The two stood a moment looking at each other. They had been brought up in the same city, perhaps not three miles apart; they had watched the same shapes of clouds, the same stars, played in the same snows, and stammered the same vernacular in their childhood. And yet, what a different world it had been to those two!

Then Rox called out, in his cheerful, ringing voice, —

"Is there anything you want to say to me?"

Still that surprised, half-guilty look in the boy's eyes. "Was he insane, after all?" remembering his impression on hearing Edith's story, and feeling a little uneasy.

"No, I don't want anything," answered the boy, rather sullenly.

Rox hesitated a moment; then he remembered that he had no time to spare, and plunged off into the hollow.

The boy stood still, staring after the lithe figure going up the road. His hand was in his pocket, and the big, cold fingers were fumbling about a pistol there. His face was livid under the tan and pimples.

Keefe Bartlett—there is no need I should tell you it was he—had come all this way to find Rox Coventry. He could not give up his purpose now; and yet, for a moment after the stranger's kindly question, which still seemed to linger among the soft humming of the purple bees in the grasses, Keefe was more than half a mind to send the pistol off at his own temples. Then the old evil look came into his face again.

"I won't turn poltroon now," he muttered, with an oath. "I came out here for that fellow's money; and I'll have it, or die;" and he started up the road.

Rox, moving rapidly along, was having his thoughts, with no little sparkling interludes of college airs this time.

"What if it was all true, that which Edith had said, and the twenty-five dollars was a matter of life and death to this boy? Curious how he had turned up in the road at this juncture!"

Rox thought of the pile of notes stuffed away in his vest pocket.

"It would be an easy thing to take out twenty-five dollars, and go back and put it into the boy's hands. What if he should make a fool of himself, and do it now? for, of course, none but a fool would do so absurd a thing! Yet, if Rox were as certain about the matter

as his pretty cousin seemed to be, he would try the experiment.

"Supposing he should do it now? Of course it would be an awful sell; but then Rox would hardly feel it. There was just time to go back and do the thing, and it was only a little rather expensive fun, after all, and nobody's business but his own."

These thoughts and a good many more like them went swiftly through the mind of Rox Coventry, underneath all, that soft place which Edith's talk had touched that morning. Rox was half ashamed of it, tried to invest the whole thing with an air of cool fun. But of a sudden the youth whirled about.

There, close behind him, with his swift, stealthy pace, was the boy again. But Rox was too intent on his errand to be startled a second time. The two were almost in the heart of the hollow, the wooded hills rising darkly on either side, and overhead the gray, smoky-looking clouds.

Rox walked straight up to the boy, whose face, just now, hardly improved on acquaintance.

"Are you the boy who told a young girl at Agawam this morning that you wanted twenty-five dollars?"

The big face was a blank of surprise for a moment or two. The fierce, evil look with which he was approaching his intended victim wholly disappeared.

"Yes," in a husky, half-frightened voice; but his eyes held to his questioner's; "I said that to her."

"I should like to know — I've a reason for asking — what you intend to do with this money, if you could get it."

A smile, dark and bitter enough, struggled over the big mouth.

"I don't think it would take long to tell; but — I ain't a beggar," with a sudden fierceness.

"No; I did not take you for one; but," with a frank cordiality of manner which made Rox Coventry the favorite he was with everybody, "I wish you would tell me just how much money you have in the world. Don't think I am rude, and, if it does not please you, don't do it."

Something in the frank, pleasant manner half compelled Keefe Bartlett against his will. He put his hand into his pocket, — not the one which held the pistol this time, — and drew out twenty cents. With some vague sense of conscience which haunted the poor, tempted soul, the boy had settled with his landlady before he started out on his errand of crime.

"Is that all?" exclaimed Rox, touched and shocked.

"That is all."

"And you have no way to get any more?"

"No."

"Poor fellow! Been at work at the cotton-mills?"

"Yes."

"Well, you shall have the twenty-five dollars. But, mind, I don't think you are a beggar," giving the turned-off hand a friendly little slap on the shoulder; and then, taking out his wallet, Rox counted over the money, — a couple of tens and a five — and put it in Keefe's hand. "There!" he said; "much good may it do you. Haven't time for another word. Good by." And, with the instinctive grace which is apt to follow a good action, Rox lifted his hat to the mill hand, and hurried off down the road again, leaving Keefe standing in the hollow, with the purple bees humming in the grasses, and the great, smoky-tinted clouds overhead; and over all these, I like to think, the glad faces of God's angels on the watch.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

above all things, it was her pride, that Edith should be educated. Alas! how many mothers, like her, look upon education as a measure rather than a means,—as an end, not a beginning;—and alas how many, like Edith, live to suffer for it.

It was a beautiful evening,—the sun shone with warmth and mellowness unusual to England—the air was fresh, and all nature seemed beautiful, but in the cottage of the Hamiltons every thing was otherwise;—a stranger passing it might have thought it was the home of happiness; it was the abode of death. Edith's mother was dying—the red tints of declining day fell with a sickly aspect, through the window curtains, into a chamber scrupulously neat and clean,—homely yet comfortable: it was the room Mrs. Hamilton had slept in for years, and now her husband, her child, her friends were around her—but care was on every face; for respect and esteem were ever accorded to the Hamiltons, though wealth was not with them—and all were silent in grief. Edith was differently attired from those around her. She had been summoned from London to her mother's dying bed; and her traveling habiliments were not gone; and, as she knelt to receive the blessing of an anxious parent, her fashionable attire contrasted strikingly with the homely garb of her village friends. Hamilton himself was wholly wretched—to him his wife was life's greatest treasure; and when the doctor entered, his anxious look silently breathing more anxiety than words could compass,—his lips moving in silence, as if afraid to speak—his out-stretched hand—all told how overpowering was his grief—how deep-seated his emotions. Alas! there was no hope—a few short hours and this restless slumber would cease for ever! and Mrs. Hamilton was sensible of it, for she seemed to try to arouse herself, now that Edith was come,—or as if she felt another tie to earth, whilst she clasped the hand of her child. There was silence indeed—the clear hum of the bees, returning laden with their spoils, and the occasional note of a feathered songster, fell deeper on the ear than all the sounds of animated humanity—for in death there is something so appalling—something that strikes home upon the hearts of all around—that they seem fearful of a sound, so silently do they await its final pang.

Edith was on her knees praying; supplicating heaven for a parent; and that parent was silently breathing her wishes to heaven for a child. O, the silence of this world, when removed far from the busy haunts of men, is beautiful indeed! It must be sweet to die in—at least sweeter than that noise which is all worldly. The dying woman spoke; and, though her words were slow and her voice faint, I could have heard them had they been softer. "Edith, my child," said she, "I am going to leave you, and I thank God that He has left one to protect you—you have been my pride and my comfort—and though it pleases Him to take me from you, He will be a Parent and a Friend to all who love Him. Edith, dearest Edith, be a good girl,—be dutiful to your earthly father; and you shall be rewarded by your Father in Heaven—could you tell, Edith, how I have loved you when you have been far—far—away from me,—how I have thought about the temptations you will be exposed to—and how sorely you must be tried amidst the gaieties of the world; and then, Edith, I have thought if it should be as it now comes to pass,—that I should be taken away from you, and you should have no mother to counsel you, and your beauty should be a snare for temptations and peril. Then, Edith, think what a mother's fears have been. Forsake the gay world—be a friend to your father; he wants some one to solace his old age, be good, and for my sake, Edith, do nothing that my spirit may not look upon." The dying woman seemed almost exhausted—and although Edith essayed to speak, her tears choked her utterance; for a time sobs—brief, stifled sobs—and those only were audible,—then there was a brief silence; it lasted not long when the clergyman entered—he conferred for a moment with the doctor; and as he said in a low solemn voice, "Let us pray,"—every one present knelt humbly and reverently whilst he offered up a supplication to heaven for the sick, for the suffering woman, for the parent, for the child, for mercy unto her who was about to depart, and for grace unto them who were still left to contend against the vanities and passions of their mortal career—that the parent might be received into the heavenly rest of a blessed Redeemer,—that the child might follow her, and that they might all be reunited in a happier world, where there shall be no more partings from those we love.

The pastor faltered as he administered the sacrament to the dying woman—he had known them long as an upright example of lovely merit; and much as he approved the principle which induced a lady to patronise the pretty Edith, he feared that from the school of frivolity and affectation the heart could not escape to return as free and as pure as it had once rambléd in the fields around her village home. Hamilton himself was overcome—lost in that deep-seated wretchedness of heart that finds no sympathy in ostentatious compassion; and as his pastor and friend pressed his hand and bade him "be of good cheer, for not one sparrow fell to the ground without the knowledge of his heavenly Father," the old man did return that pressure, and would have spoken but he could not; for his voice failed him—and a tear ran down his furrowed cheek. For an hour the spirit of the dying woman flickered as if unwilling to depart. Her strength was ebbing fast; she looked as if she would speak, and took the hand of her child; but

the silent motion of the lip, and the anxious eye were all that her dying energies were equal to. Edith had never witnessed aught like death before; and it bore down upon her with more poignancy, that the first she should ever witness was of that being she most loved; wildly pressing the hand of her mother to her lips, she prayed earnestly, and sincerely, that this cup might pass from them; but with a sob she added, "Oh, God, thy will be done!" and when she had ceased—that hand was stiff and lifeless, those eyes were glazed with the mists of eternity, that cheek was blanched with the pallid hue of death, yes! the visitor of the mighty as well as the humble had summoned another spirit to the world unseen.

Words will but faintly picture out the sorrows of an everlasting parting; and they who had sought to soothe, retired to let the sufferers give vent to griefs they felt were exquisite. Edith and her father were alone; and the long dull silence of twilight was not broken by a word. Sometimes a half suppressed sob, a stifled sigh, or a tear fell upon the floor, and again all was still. Evening came, and then night; the minister returned, and offered to lead Hamilton from the chamber of death; but when he went up to the old man to rouse him from his lethargy, he shrunk back when he touched his hand, and drew his own across his forehead as if to be certain of his consciousness; and again he laid hold of the hand that had fallen from his grasp—it was cold as marble—and, when he procured a light, he found that from him too life had departed, for his spirit had sunk into sleep—and he was dead.

Edith Hamilton was an orphan.

CHAPTER II

No, no, that picture suits thee not,
Sketch'd for a maid of yore;
She lives no more, or, darker lot!
Her virtues live no more.
Wild flowers, they sought life's ruder air,
Contagious blights met them there;
Where is the maid—the virtues' where?
Thou art not she! *Isabel Fitzalan.*

The Opera was crowded—Sontag in all her glory: the public conceived it impossible that higher glories could be achieved by the human voice; and the acclamations of a proud and noble assemblage, the praise of the high-born and enraptured audience fell sweetly upon the gratified ears of the songsters, as they already were with almost superfluous commendation. In a box on the second tier, there sat a young female of surpassing loveliness; she was neatly, yet so elegantly attired that she seemed to be of a different stamp from those around her. It was Edith Hamilton: at her side sat her lover, alas, a lover no longer! Captain Marden: he was evidently proud of his companion; and the battery of upturned glasses from top's alley amused him; for Marden was pleased that he could outvie every one in possessing so lovely a victim. To him it had been an easy conquest: how many such are constantly occurring! how many more such must occur! Mrs. Marden had taken Edith from a lowly station of innocent happiness: she had cultured the intellect, improved the taste, and embellished the understanding of the rustic; but it was all superficial—much to adorn, but little to improve. In the humble situation for which Providence had designed her, Edith might have been admired, contented and happy. A fashionable education had implanted much good and much evil; it had placed the flowers of the hot-house on the brambles of the heath; and although the plant had become more showy, it was less sweet. Mrs. Marden had chosen a fashionable school for her protegee, and her education was made up of accomplishments: there was of course, a result of some good points, some bad ones. Of which, gentle reader, could fashion implant the most?

On her parents' death, Edith had become the companion of her patroness. An introduction into society during this period, and the flattering commendations bestowed on her person, had rendered her presuming; and after she had been initiated into the observances of fashionable life, Mrs. Marden was attacked with a severe and sudden illness that rendered her life despaired of in a few days. Her dependent situation emboldened Captain Marden in his addresses to the favorite. Shall I say it, that for months he had secretly offered the incense of admiration at the altar of his victim, until Edith loved! He had offered her youth, beauty and unconquerable love; and before the remains of his mother were laid in the tomb, he had promised Edith his protection, or threatened to send her forth an insulted outcast into a harsh and cruel world: Edith had not a friend: she had no one to fly to, none to counsel her. On the one hand she saw the gratification of every wish; on the other, wretchedness and suffering. Here, she looked forward to the cold pity of a heartless world; and there she beheld the society and protection of one whom she loved, and who she fondly believed loved her. It was a task to decide; but with fashionable principles only, could she think twice? It was soon over. She had become a thing she had once hardly dared to think upon: she was the guilty object of a licentious passion; and on her first appearance at the opera, she was gratified at the sensation she produced; for she was talented, imaginative and vain. She had learned to think "whatever is, is right;" and she consoled herself in her infamy by a sophistry so specious!

There was another individual whose happiness was somewhat influenced by the fascinations of the beauty. It was Ryland Percival: he had been performing the duties of assis-

From the London Old Monthly.
SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF A BEAUTY.
(FROM THE AURORA MSS.)
CHAPTER I.
'Tis a common tale,
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form. *Wordsworth.*
EDITH HAMILTON was a beauty—a blonde of the most exquisite delicacy—a violet, breathing its sweetness beneath the shadow of village innocence, unseen, unsullied and unknown; her mother had lived in the service of the lady of the manor, and contracted notions above the station in life which she held;

to the parish doctor at C—, when he first saw Edith at her parents' funeral. He was struck with her beauty, captivated by her manners, and enraptured with her society. In a word, he was in love: yet before he had defined his passion, even to himself, Edith had departed for ever from C—; and many months elapsed before his duties allowed him to visit London. In that period, the decease of an uncle had placed a competence within his reach; and after many fruitless endeavors to discover the enslaver of his reason, he saw her at the opera on the evening of his first visit. The presence of Marden, whose character he knew, and the look of Edith, conjured up surmises that he hardly dared to think upon; for being possessed of strong feelings, he had cherished in secret a passion for the beauty, that now tinged his character with the melancholy sorrows of hope deferred. He hardly dared to believe that she had fallen: he could scarce trust his senses with a thought unworthy of one beloved; he waited therefore the conclusion of the performance that he might trace her home.

After a short and secret watching, Percival felt the dreadful conviction forced upon him, that she was fallen indeed. But who that ever loved can cherish harsh feelings against the object of that overwhelming passion? He knew her to be guilty in the eye of a world whose goodness is little but veiled guilt; yet he wished to know whether Edith was indeed the same, and he lingered at the door of the house till he saw Marden lead her to a carriage; and, waiting to catch the footman, he learned her address and retired.

The scene was changed.—He was alone in a boudoir, whose meanest object was calculated to please. Edith's idea of the beautiful had been carried into effect so far as limitless extravagance could conduce to perfection. The light fell through a painted window, and disclosed an assemblage of all that is coveted or admired: it was an apartment that contained everything that could dazzle the senses or subdue the understanding. Books of the rarest beauty—pictures of the best schools—sculptures of the finest taste—and the boudoir opened into a conservatory, whose choice exotics made the air redolent with perfume. Percival looked around him with a pang. If Edith had been bought, she had certainly fetched a price: but alas! what price can redeem a ruined soul? and as he listened to the rippling of the water and the warbling of birds, he lamented that one so favored should now be degraded to be only the minister to illicit desire. He shuddered when he thought of the prostitution of so much taste; and he was lost in thought when Edith entered. She was changed, though still the same—more lovely perhaps, though less innocent. She saluted him as a friend; and, as she reverted to old times, a tear trembled in her eye, and Percival's voice was less strong than usual. The two who were already united. Bleeding forth a flood of anguished feelings, and seizing her hand, he imprinted one kiss upon her cheek, breathed one "God bless you!" and tore himself away.

CHAPTER III.

I ne'er without a sigh beheld the tear
On beauty's cheek to love and pity dear!
Nor has the muse e'er framed a fabled lay,
To show the world how Woman goes astray;
I would not give a guileless bosom pain,
Nor on unspotted honor cast a stain.
Though Time has graven his wrinkles on my brow,
And rudely chilled the heart's enraptured glow,
I once could love—still highly prize the fair;
A friendly monitor, I cry 'Beware!'
For them I write, for them record my tale,
As angels lovely, but as mortals frail.

[Balfour.

Percival had resolved on continuing his medical studies, and had passed a season at the Hotel Dieu; and during the summer vacation he made a tour of Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. He had ever thought of one whom he had loved; and he would have given worlds for an invisible cap, that he might be conveyed whither he would. How often then would he have watched the course of Edith Hamilton! In his own mind he had often contrasted the race after pleasure, enervating, intoxicating, and debasing, with the serene course of retired life, where a due exercise of the senses produces enjoyment, whilst over-exertion invariably leads to weakness of the spirit, and a yearning after excitements still more cloying.

At length he was at Florence, gay sunny Florence—the city of palaces and pictures—the resort of the idle and luxurious—surrounded by vine-clad mountains, decked with innumerable villas, and washed by the meandering Arno. Here he rested for awhile, examining its architecture, its sculptures, and its beauties, reveling in a continuing excitement of intellectual delight. One evening he was strolling upon the Prada, willing away an hour in witnessing the sun setting gloriously behind the Tuscan hills. In a fit of musing, he heard his native tongue spoken with elegance unusual in a foreign clime; and looking round, he beheld a party of English walking on the delightful spot he had himself chosen. Percival was pleased to find himself near those who reminded him of England. As they passed, he thought them some of his country's aristocracy; for they bore with them the air of conscious rank and station: and when Percival looked upon the lady who formed the belle, and who seemed the fascination of the group, he recognized the well known features of Edith Hamilton.

She knew him too; and, with a look that none witnessed

but himself, she placed her finger on her lip. In a few moments they had passed; and Percival returned home to discover what was now the fate of the beauty. Summoning an inquisitive fellow, whom he had occasionally employed, and who fulfilled the office of valet, courier, messenger, or lacquey (many of whom are to be found where English wealth is spent), Percival gave him directions to trace out the fair one, and learn what he could of herself and her companions. He then went to the opera, and found the object of his first love decked out in the fullest elegance of capricious fashion, and forming a source of attraction equal to the Prima Donna herself. During the performance, he refrained from noticing her more than common curiosity for a reigning belle might have prompted, and he retired early to learn from his inquisitive attendant, that Lady Altonmore, and his lordship, were staying a few weeks at a villa in the campagna with a party of English. He learned also that his lordship was 'un magnifico'; and that his residence was a continued scene of merriment and diversion.

For a time, Percival wavered in his mind whether he should watch her progress or fly from her fascinations. He had nerved his heart sufficiently to feel no regret that another revelled in the possession of those beauties which had once enslaved him: but this was no transient passion; he felt that her presence even now possessed a power of entrancing his senses; and he feared lest he should be again sufficiently unmaned to become the slave of passion. Weighing his own feelings, therefore, he resolved to fly from the presence of a being whose power over him was too great for his comfort; and, taking a last walk on the banks of the Arno, he started to find himself in company with the assumed Lady Altonmore. She was alone. "Is it you, Edith?" he enquired as she approached him, and by her blush of recognition, told that his appearance at least was unexpected. "Is it you, Edith, or am I suffering from mental delusion? Am I speaking to Miss Hamilton?"

"You are right, Percival," said the lady, "I am the same being, though I am changed in name. You know in whose company I am staying?" "I do," replied he. "I know him for one that never let female innocence stand in the way of his libertine passions,—as one that never yet shewed the nobleness of nobility, nor the honor of high birth. Are you his wife, Edith, —or —" Percival lingered on the word.

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the unblushing Lady Altonmore. "Wives are quite unfashionable in the present state of society. The march of intellect has taught the elite of the world, that temporary marriages are by far the most agreeable."

"Is this your opinion, madam?" enquired Percival, "or is it a tale with which you would amuse me?—There was a time when these were not your sentiments, Edith. But you are changed now. I see but little respect for the tender and dying parent. Do you imagine," and Percival's voice grew serious, "do you imagine that you will ever meet that parent again, if the commencement of your life be in the company of the libertine Lord Altonmore? Forgive me, if I create a momentary pang in your bosom; but I cannot endure to see you participating in the licentious orgies of which common report announces you high priestess. There was a time, Edith, when I would have given worlds for your companionship,—but now —" He paused, for Edith was in tears, and Percival's cheek was blanched with mental suffering whilst he spoke; but after a momentary effort, she resumed her gaiety. "Come, come Ryland," she exclaimed, "no more of this; you blame me because you have never been subjected to the same temptations. You think yourself good because you have not yet fallen. Take care of yourself.—You may live to pity me more than you condemn. I am too old to take advice, you too young to give it. Let us part friends. Addio!"

CHAPTER IV.

Faded and frail the glorious form,
And changed the soul within,
While pain and grief, and strife and storm,
Told the dark secret—SIN!

[M. J. J.

Two years are fled, and where is the beauty now? Time has sped on with rapid pinion since Lady Altonmore was the belle of Florence; and though I shall not seek to follow her through all her protean forms, or the labyrinthine mazes of duplicity and deceit, I shall recount her next meeting with Ryland Percival.

Shall I confess a boyish admiration to account for any interest I might feel in the fate of one so lovely and so loved? I trust that, for the sake of human nature, it will not be necessary for me to do so. Would that on earth there might be an interest created in the bosoms of ninety and nine for every one that wanders from the path of rectitude. Would that every man now breathing could see into the deep recesses of the human heart, whilst he thoughtlessly ministers to the gratification of his own licentious passions, and supports a course of life that he ought to recoil from with horror. Tear off the mask of duplicity that hides human nature, and we find the world pouring forth all the vials of its indignation at the course of life led by those who have been more sinned against than sinning, yet secretly feeding the flame of indulgence, that burns upon a shrine already so polluted. Would to God that I could write upon men's hearts in characters of living fire! And I would pray for strength to write 'Charity,' till every soul was softened. I care little for that mockery of goodness,

which tells me I am vicious because I sympathize with a race so outcast and forlorn. I care little for the worthless principle that sets me down as depraved, because I choose to think it no sin to examine the condition of the reckless and abandoned outcast. HE came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and shall man neglect thousands perishing hopelessly around him? No! I would ask, What difference is there in human hearts, that those who offend should be considered alien to our nature? I would tell those who blame me, to go out into the world—to image to their own feelings the wretchedness of being outcast from all that is good—to be scorned by some, and reviled by others—to endure the sorrowful consciousness of being more sinned against than sinning—to know that all reputable ways of earning bread are denied them—and if they do this—if they combat prejudice boldly and fairly, and then do not pity more than they condemn; then I say, in the words of St. Paul, "If ye have not charity, ye are but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal."

—In a fashionable street, leading into one of our fashionable squares, a neat equipage was standing. The door-plate exhibited the name of Dr. Percival, our old friend, now happily married and settled in life. He was not a fashionable doctor; his own good sense taught him to despise the affectation of servility, which is but too often accorded to station. And as Percival recognised only an intellectual or a moral superiority in mankind, it is hardly to be wondered at, that his success in practice was slow, although in the end it would be certain. He was married too, to an amiable, elegant, and accomplished woman; one whom he valued for the quiet possession of those virtues which adorn the domestic circle. Here was no wondrous beauty to captivate his soul, no blanded spells of fascination to throw around him the witchery of sensual captivation, but there was that unwhispered love, founded upon a proper estimation of honorable virtue, that afforded more real happiness than could ever emanate from the most passionate regard. His wife looked upon his pure and lofty character with almost reverence. She adored him as a husband, and venerated him as a friend; and although the magic word of 'love' had never passed Percival's lips, she set a higher value upon his esteem than she could have placed upon any thing that bore the name of passion. And Percival was happy,—happy in the enjoyment of that felicitous intercourse of thought, feeling and sentiment, which being founded upon the best and noblest feelings of human nature, ever leads to a long and an untroubled course of mutual happiness.

Evening was closing in, and Percival had not yet left the dinner-table. He was not a fashionable doctor; for he could not endure the restless frivolity of enervated patients—to him,

"The ever nameless—ever new disease"

was a monster that he detested. But if he alighted those who were ill at ease, no one ever applied his energies with greater skill than he did, when disease and distress were his antagonists. To him there was something exciting in the struggle when he could bring the whole of his experience to the contest, and by a liberal exercise of his purse and talents, grapple boldly with disease and vanquish it. It was for this, that his name was almost worshiped by the poor who knew him. To them he was ever kind, his services ever ready; and his carriage was now waiting a summons from a poor and wretched being, who was forsaken and abandoned by every one; yet he was ever ready to start as soon as he received word of any change occurring to her, and no one was ever more liberally rewarded than he felt himself to be by the honest convictions of his own bosom. It was on this evening, when he had witnessed one of these scenes of squalid misery, that lie buried as it were beneath the superficialities of London society, that as Percival was being driven slowly up the Haymarket, he set his eye upon a figure that seemed familiar to him, and as he passed, the light fell full upon her face and revealed the flushed countenance of Edith Hamilton.

Percival looked again to convince himself: he could hardly believe that the bold and impudent air of wanton levity which sat upon every feature, could ever have assumed a place upon one whom he had once thought more beautiful than the boasted Florentine Venus, to whom he had compared her. But he saw that there was no error: he could not be mistaken in a face whose dimly defined characters were still shadowed upon his heart; and his pulse beat with a wilder throbb than usual, while he communed with himself how he might best hold forth the hand of charity. Emerging from his carriage, he directed his servant to walk slowly homewards; and looking round him for a policeman who was not far off, he directed his attention to Edith; and, presenting his card and a handsome donation, Percival requested him to find out who and what she was, and report to him on the following morning.

Policeman A. 37, was punctual and particular; he told Percival all he had learned—the flash name and residence of the fair one, and all that he could pick up of her acquaintances. Percival determined to visit her that night: his heart was sick and could not rest. It was a November night, wet, foggy and dismal; the streets were nearly clear, none but those who were obliged by absolute necessity would leave the shelter of their own fire-sides, and Percival hailed these as good points, for he thought he should be sure to find the fallen one at home. Wrapping himself, therefore, in plentiful appliances for the protection of his health, Percival penetrated his way into one of the back streets of the Strand; and, having gained the house, he looked about to reconnoitre those

ward visible signs of inward and spiritual doings, which are but too common in this great metropolis.

It was a snuff-shop that he was directed to; and he scrutinised its external appearance before he entered, as he wished to preserve his incognito. In the window, were the usual variety of cigars and boxes, curled and twisted pipes, a black-moor, the play-bills of the day, and a few indecent snuff-boxes. The shop had been partitioned to make a small back room; and this was partly of glass, curtained with dirty red stuff, occasionally moved by those within, as they were impelled by curiosity to look at an occasional purchaser. Percival thought that, disguised as he was, it would be a chance if any one could recognise him; so he walked in boldly and selecting a few 'prime Havanas,' he was politely requested by the lady in waiting to walk inside: her customer, however preferred being nearer the air, and he lit one of the twisted weeds and sat down to wait the rain over. To his own heart he acknowledged that he dared not enter: he had already heard the voice of Edith in conversation with some fancy friend. He smoked in silence and listened to what was said.

"But I say, Fred, where the devil have you been this long while?" It was Edith that spoke.

"Why Luce, to tell the truth, I've been down in the country."

"Well, and what the devil took you down there?" enquired she.

"O the coach—went to see the old un—raise the wind—get some brads—flare up, have a lark, eh."

"Yes," replied Edith; "you are always out upon your larks. When are you going to treat me to the play?"

"O the Lord knows, I don't," was the reply: "but how have you been? and where have you been? W. wouldn't blab—where's your tucker?" Uncle? eh, nice man—friend of mine sometimes—deuced queer go—how is it?"

"Why," returned Lucy, "I've been regular down upon my luck, cleaned out, every thing gone, and my body in quod."

"In quod?" you?" ejaculated Fred.

"Yes," replied Lucy, "I was something peckish one night. I'd been chaffing and lushing, not above half drest, Sal and I went down to the ham and beef shop to get some supper—passed the old cobbler's shop just below. He was just come home drunk, and caught hold of me. I slapped his face and ran on for the grub. When I came back, the ugly-mouthed beggar gave us both in charge for being out without bonnets. I was half drunk, so I kicked the lobster, got in the cage—locked up—next morning got a month of it, tramp, tramp, tramp—let out on Monday, and here I am."

"Pleasant," remarked Fred.

"Pleasant!" said Lucy. "Yes,——pleasant! and while I was away, W. seized all my things for rent. You must let me have a trifle, Fred; I hav'n't a rag to put on. Lend us a sovereign."

"A'n't worth it, 'pon my soul. Ten shillings is all I'm able to see you on Sunday. Post the browns then. None of your gammon; here's a crown for you. Bye, bye. Where's W? Give us a weed. I say, old cock," here he addressed Percival; "Why you're a regular chimney, eh, passage for smoke! Toss ye a go of gin? Won't—my eyes! 'n't you a blessed shirk! [puff, puff]. Good night, Luce."

Percival had witnessed all this in silence and dismay.—Memory pictured out what Edith had been. Lucy pictured out what she was. She approached him with the meretricious air of a courtesan; and when Percival looked her full in the face, she said not a word, but fell into a chair, and wept.—Percival went not away alone; he took the weeping fair one to an institution where she might yet be redeemed to good conduct if there existed one green spot, one little relic of olden time, one feeling not yet prostrated at the dreadful shrine of infamy and pollution.

CHAPTER V.

Turn, turn again—there yet is time
To offer up one heartfelt prayer:

The life of Edith Hamilton, is a tale that might soften the heart of a stoic. To trace Man in his long career of vice and infamy, to look upon the lord of creation, bowing his nobler attributes to the foul shrines of intemperance and dishonor, or to trace the blight of each higher feeling in a course of libertinism and debauchery, each, all are bad; but dreadful as it is, Man, if it wills him so, is able to contend with the thraldoms that bind his spirit, he knows that the world will forgive the errors of youth, he feels that libertinism is a species of recognised and allowable failing; but with Woman it is otherwise: she has no holdfast to throw round her when she has once launched on the ocean of dissipation. The world makes no allowance for her errors, and refuses to palliate her weaknesses; the first step taken she can rise no more. How damning then must be the curse attached to him who takes advantage of one unguarded moment to plunge Woman into sin, and to render her future life one of bitterness and regret!

Percival was rejoiced, as all must rejoice, that Edith had not been wholly sacrificed. It afforded him pure and heartfelt satisfaction that she had been snatched as a brand from the burning; and he endeavored by every means that the warmest interest could dictate to revive the old tastes and affections that once existed in her heart. He endeavored to present new objects and excitements to her mind, and, by affording her intellectual enjoyments, to wean her from regretting the loss of those sensual indulgences from which he had

wrested her. At times, indeed, he fancied that he perceived her sorrowing, though he knew not why; and when the news reached him, that she had fled from the protection he had afforded her, he lamented his ill-requited labors more that they had failed in giving happiness to her, than that his own endeavors had been sacrificed in vain. A few days after, he received from her an apology for her doings, so touching yet so true, that it unfolded to him a page in the human heart, which as yet he had never read:—

If mine were a tale of fiction, I might seek to unravel those mysterious threads that make up the strings of human feeling—those chords of exquisite sensibility, and but too often (like this) of mistaken feeling, from which arises so much of the false sentiment that pervades the whole atmosphere of society; but mine is a true tale, neither wrought up into bright scenes of happiness, nor deeply shaded in its dark career of sin:—a picture of life is all that I have aimed at. Should the reader require stronger food for his imagination, he must seek it in the pages of fiction: mine is that of truth.

Percival's heart bled whilst he read the following:—
"Percival! the world would have deemed me an ungrateful wretch for flying from your bounty; but you will not do so; for you are always more ready to forgive than to condemn.—You will excuse me for leaving a station of constant wretchedness, although to many it would have been one of happiness. Percival, I assure you, that every gratification with which I was surrounded, was embittered by the thought, that it was undeserved. You, who have not trodden in a career of reckless vice, can hardly judge of the fierceness and strength of every passion which it engenders: you cannot be aware of the loathing it produces for every thing that is noble and good; your kindness snatched me from a headlong course of infamy and guilt, you placed me in a station to be envied, you endeavored to draw me back to virtue, and plant anew the seeds of religion and virtue; but you were casting your seed upon a barren rock. You little thought to sow good wheat and to reap tares, or that one whom you knew in happier hours could be so utterly lost; but so it is—Percival, since childhood, I never had any strict principles of virtue taught me. I was taught the follies of the world, the admiration I might command, the superiority of pleasure. I became vain and arrogant. Circumstances threw me upon the world. I could not give up the indulgences I had become accustomed to; and I was soon lost to virtue, then to honor, then to feeling, lost utterly but for you. Percival—when I first fell, my mind was so veiled with the dazzling glare of imagined pleasure and anticipated delight, that I had not sufficient reason left to know that I was falling, until I was too far gone to recede. It was then—when I awakened from my dream to a full sense of my wild career, when I felt all those pangs of anguish and remorse that steep the soul in a lethargy from which nothing but new excitements can awake it—when a pause in the course of dissipation awakened me to the damning torment that ensues from an unrestrained pursuit of forbidden pleasure—pleasure did I say? phantom rather—hideous phantom created in the sinning imagination, and invested with charms by the spirit of its maker, which at length overpowers its creator and leads him into wilder abysses of guilt than ever Frankenstein was led by the monster he created; so was it with me. The phantom followed me like a shadow—the blandishments which first invested it are forgotten, and the hideous outline of its lineaments remains, and then, when the racking brain and the aching heart tell of wasted hours and wanton desires, what remains to banish thought so maddening, but new excesses, new excitements and a new awakening to wretchedness and sin.

Percival, I dare not offer you the polluted thanks of a wretched and licentious being. I shall soon be lost in the degradation that waits me. In death I have a secret to tell, will you be a friend to me then? I know you will, seek not to find me till then; but forget and forgive the truant

"EDITH HAMILTON."

CHAPTER VI.

Smiles
Play'd, meteorlike, upon a hundred cheeks,
As if contagiously; while sparkling lamps
Pour'd forth a deluging lustre o'er the crowd.
And music, like a siren, wended the heart
From every groveling and contentious thought,
From every care.

But all was like a mask
That seemed to veil the features of the damned.

For some months Percival heard nothing more of her; and he had almost lost sight of one to whom, in spite of her errors, he would have offered every comfort his purse could afford: for he would have rejoiced more over one repentant sinner, than over ninety and nine who need it not. Her image was then suddenly conjured up before him by the warbling of a song that he had heard her sing in happier hours. Percival had been visiting one whom he had known in better times, an industrious woman, who had been married to a man that had broken her heart; and he was walking from the court where she lived, when he passed one of those taverns technically termed "night-houses." It was in full illumination, and a loud burst of clamorous applause awakened the doctor from the current of his reflections. For a moment he listened; and he felt convinced that it was Edith's voice; and, in a few minutes, by the payment of a few pence, he was seated amongst the motley group assembled. To the casual spectator, the idler, or the careless, such a scene would have been passed over.

To him it was full of interest; for during his pilgrimage he had learned to read much in the countenances of men, and he could judge from outward manifestations much of what was passing within. Percival shuddered as he surveyed the easy path that sin presented to her victims. Here was a girl hardly seventeen, yet her eyes were brightened with intoxication, her cheeks bedaubed with paint, and her manners of wanton levity formed a strange contrast to the innocence that ought to accompany such years. "Probably," thought he, "she was once a parent's pride: she may now be his cursed child." Again, near him he saw a youth whose countenance he knew: his language told him to be a medical student; and his dress betokened mourning for one dead—it might be a parent, a sister, a friend,—and his sorrow was such, that whilst to the world he bore the outward tokens of regret, to himself and to his God, he showed only a heart worthless and depraved, and daily becoming more attached to the enervating orgies of folly and excess. Percival had some knowledge of him; and when he remembered who he was, and thought of his widowed mother, and his sisters who looked up to him for protection from the rebuffs of life,—when he considered all this, and the arduous struggle necessary to maintain a professional career, he saw before him a shadowy vista of disappointed hopes and wasted energies; and he hoped that he might be deceived in the youth's identity. But there were other things to be learned in that school of infamy. There was a girl, a mere child, whose showy dress set off a person of juvenile sweetness. Close to her was an elderly bloated woman. Percival read their situation in a moment. It was a mother sacrificing her child to the passions of the heedless and dissipated. And for what?—To enable her to indulge in habitual intoxication at the price of a child's prostitution! Who would have thought that those sounds of revelry and riot were but the delusive covering for scenes like this? Who would have thought that beneath the mask of joy and gaiety which every thing assumed, so much vice and wickedness should lie concealed? But so it was.

Percival knew that vain would be any attempt of his to awaken the beauty in her career. He knew that it would be useless to exercise generosity or pity: but he thought of the hour when she would be laid a livid corpse without a friend to offer her the last rites of humanity. He shuddered as he saw the havoc time and dissipation were making on her beauty; and he thought that soon she might need a pauper's pittance to consign her to the grave. At her side Percival perceived one whom he recognised as "Fred," a partaker in scenes like this! Tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, he wrote as follows:—

"Edith,—A day must come when you will need a friend. I do not now ask you to leave the life that is killing you; for I have often asked you in vain: but promise me, that when misery and penitence have taken place of those scenes of hollow-hearted joy, that when the cold pity of a heartless world leaves you to death and destruction, you will send to me: even then, Edith, I will befriend you. Send to me when you want help. Scruple not to send for me, even if you will not be turned from a career so wretched. He, whose I am, and whom I serve, forbids me to forsake you."

As he folded the paper and gave it to the beauty, she spoke not a word; but her rising bosom and speaking eye told Percival that gratitude was not altogether lost. He departed, a sadder yet wiser man.

CHAPTER VII.

For never was a story of more woe
Than this.

Shakespeare.

Let us pass over two short years more. Another span in the duration of human existence; a lapse that we look forward to as an age, or look back on as a dream. Time, in its changeless cycle, moves on with steady step though stealthily. To some, how quick has been his flight! To some, the pomps and vanities of the world have rendered life an intoxicating torrent of continued revelry; to others, its every step has been attended with the dull pressure of affliction, or marked with the iron grasp of anxiety and doubt. To Percival the time had been beneficial. He was rising in his profession; and his path in life was smooth and changeless. Wholly occupied in professional duties, or sharing in the enjoyments of the domestic circle, his felicity was without those strong exacerbations of joy and grief that leave their imprint behind them. He moved on in that even tenor of his way, doing good whenever he had the opportunity, feeling abundantly repaid by the earthly rewards he received, and looking forward to a distant period, when that happiness should be rendered everlasting.

But there was one to whom those years were ages. One whose very soul seemed consumed by the corroding canker of inward misery and outward guilt; to whom days were as years—nights almost endless, and who felt every thing embittered by the rank poison of sin, that seemed to have been circulated through every vein, till her whole being was like a tree scathed by lightning and left to perish; daily rotting and mouldering, useless and neglected; yielding at night-time a ghastly phosphoric light to show what she was. She was now a living mouldering trunk; a human dry-rot had attacked her body, soul, and spirit, and she was now lingering without energy and without hope; cursing her existence, and blasting with horrid imprecations the punishments entailed by a reckless abandonment to infamy and vice.

Edith Hamilton was on her dying bed, in an unused closet

one of the vilest dens of infamy that the dark obscurities of London only can contain. There—alleged and alone, racked with bodily torment and mental misery, until her brain whirled round with the maniac ferocity of unquenchable disease,—with her dying cries hushed by brute force, and the few comforts that might have softened death, withheld by the wretched hands that sometimes tended her—there, a victim to a life of wickedness, lay the remains of the beauty! A sad spectacle, even to those who had witnessed wretchedness from their youth upwards! Her long auburn tresses had been despoiled in an unseen moment of sleep—her few articles of worn-out apparel stolen ere she was dead—and without a single human being to receive her last sigh, or to recoil from her last curse, there she lay, dying slowly and fearfully, with all the accumulated consequences of disease and neglect. Yes! there was all that was mortal of Edith Hamilton! without one to moisten her parched lips—without one to perform even the meanest offices for her—without one to receive her dying wishes: and yet but a few short years before, she had been the admired of all admirers; a few short years before, she had been bowed to and adored! The noble and wealthy contended for the honor of protecting her, and pampered every wish of her heart, until she had become the petted child of folly—the willing votary to illicit gratifications. Here was the consummation of that life—abandoned to the care of that God, whose mercy she so long had scoffed at.

But there was one near her who looked up to her as a mother, and that one was a little child, the offspring of a prostitute, to whom Edith had been a friend in brighter hours, and who bequeathed her child to her care. The child looked up to her as a mother, and running into the room—such as it was—awaked Edith from a transient lapse of half-sleeping rest, which worn-out nature had at last conceded.

"Mummer, mummer," exclaimed the child, "look here; pretty pinner Charley got! Mummer, kiss Charley." Edith turned to look upon the child. She had pitied an infant whom fortune had consigned to such a scene for stamping the first impression of life; and as she turned she felt conscious that she had been long sleeping, dreaming or insane. Feebly did she whisper to the child to fetch a packet of letters from a drawer. And then she clutched them eagerly, as if those memorials of the past could ease the pangs of death. She unfolded the letters, and seeking out one, she sent the child for a pen, and directed it to Dr. Percival. The child took it to the woman of the house. She knew that Edith had seen better days: she thought, too, that from its being to a doctor, it might bring some comfort to the house, or at least remove Edith to a hospital to die. Then the woman thought of the funeral, and she sent the letter, lest Edith should die first.

The letter was sent, and Edith was again conscious,—she hoped that she might remain as still *Paradise came*.—She knew he would come, but the minutes seemed like hours. She would have prayed to God for help and support, but her tongue clave to her mouth, and her sorrows choked her. Then the hot scalding tears seemed dropping around her like liquid fire. She would have given—but she had nothing to give, so she did not get it—but had she possessed worlds she would have given them for one cup of cold water to cool her parched mouth. She could scarce speak, and her throat was hoarse with the cries which her tortures forced from her. At times when any one came near her, it was but to curse her noise, or to threaten her with the gag. Then they bound her with cords to prevent her violence; and after her moments of delirium she was gone again. Then the minutes seemed endless. She thought that Percival too had forgotten her, and she looked back at the period of her life when her path had been strewn thick with flowers. She felt their thorns now; and she thought till a new fit of madness came, and again she was worn out in vain attempts to break the cord that bound her.

At last Percival came. He had been from home, but on the receipt of the summons, he had set out; and when he reached her bedside, he could hardly believe that the worn and altered woman before him was the ill-fated beauty. At the sight of him, her madness returned with three-fold violence. She cursed every thing that was good, every one that was near her; and she intermingled her ejaculations with mutterings about those who had forsaken her. Percival shuddered at the violence of her manner. He ordered those who had intruded to retire. He tried to open the window, but in vain. He bathed her temples with vinegar, and sat by her for hours. But no consciousness returned. During the early part of the night she lay in a state of insensibility, rocking her head backward and forward on the pillow without ceasing, sometimes muttering names that Percival knew not: at others, she would start up for a moment, gnash her teeth, and throw the few bed-clothes back; then tear off her garments, and with furious menaces sink down exhausted. Then again she would laugh with a wild hysterical chuckle, hollow and forced, a laugh worse than dreadful. Percival knew that life's fitful fever drew near a close. Her pulse accelerated; fits of madness followed in rapid succession; her features grew horribly distorted, and muttered curses revealed to Percival the horrid anguish of her being, that even when uncontrolled by reason gave vent only to curses.

There were none in that haunt of reckless vice, that cared to bestow a single thought upon the dying woman. Sometimes, when a lapse of silence occurred, Percival heard those signs of concealed iniquity, that are but little seen by the

casual spectators of the vicious and depraved. Doors opening at all hours of the night; the stealthy step of the sly cautious man; the loud laugh of the intoxicated prostitute; the constant supplies of liquor, and the lavish expenditure of money—lightly got and lightly gone. After a while Percival thought he perceived a moisture appearing on her forehead, and he argued it to precede a change. He had scarcely observed it, when he heard a heavy footstep ascending the stairs, and the confused sound of voices, as if in opposition or reproach.

"I will see Lucy," said a strong manly voice.

"Do be quiet, Fred," exclaimed one. "You can't see her—she's very bad," said another. "He's deuced wild when he's got a drop," said a third. "I tell you, I will see her," repeated the man. "So — you infernal faggot. I'll down with you if you don't let me pass."

"She's dying, you brute, she is," returned the woman.

"Dying!" ejaculated he. "You be —. It's a cursed lie." "It's true, Fred," interposed one of the fainter voices.

"Then, by — I will see her. So move, you confounded old —." Then arose more remonstrances, followed by a scuffle. Percival went to the door just in time to hear a heavy fall, a loud scream, the cries of one or two women, and the heavy step of some one rapidly ascending. Keeping the door in his hand, he awaited the coming of the stranger. At first sight he recognized 'Fred,' now wildly and brutally intoxicated, degraded in manners, person, and sentiment.

"Who — are you?" was his first inquiry of Dr. Percival.

"Be silent," said Percival calmly. "She whom you seek is already in the hands of death. Go away, and let her die in peace."

"I suppose you're the doctor, are you?" returned Fred.

"Then I tell you what it is; it's all — lies. Luce, Luce! give us a kiss, girl. You'll be well soon."

Percival tried to turn him away, but in vain.

"Look here, Doctor," he exclaimed. "She led me into vice—I called it pleasure then. She helped me then to spend more than I earned; and for her sake I robbed my employers. For her I cheated my parents, broke my poor mother's heart, forged on my poor old father; and all for her; and yet you want to turn me out now she is dying. Why, Doctor, for her I have been degraded from society—made an associate with outcasts and wretches. Driven from good to bad—bad to worse—worse to worse—from that to the last extremes of vice, till I am what you see me—the bully of a brothel! Doctor! doctor! don't let her die! She must say, 'God bless you, Fred!' Why, I have given up all the world for her. Lucy, Luce!"

Percival perceived that it was useless to attempt to stop the torrent of his words. The reckless ruffian went up to Edith, and roughly awaked her. "Lucy, I say Luce!" Edith stared round her wildly—returning consciousness seemed to awaken her to those who were around her.

"Fred, is it you?" she inquired in a low voice. "I am dying."

"No, no, — that. Not all up yet; eh, Doctor?"

"It is, it is!" raved Edith, suddenly seized with delirium, as she started up in bed. "It's all over, Fred; but come—one song more." Here she attempted to sing. "Ah, Marden taught me that—Marden—hell fire seize him! Percival!" and she seized his hand with the energy of madness. "Percival, go to Marden. Swear it. Go to him, and curse him with all the damning curses hell ever taught me. Blast him with all the evil wishes that ever burned in a maddened brain!" Here she tore from her bed, looked round with the fury of madness unrestrained, and seizing Percival by the hand, she took that of the suddenly sobered Fred.

"Fred," she exclaimed, "forgive me. Percival, you told me this would end me. Give my last curse to Marden. Tell him he murdered me. Tell him—"

Here with a fit of uncontrolled passion she sunk down exhausted. After a few moments she recovered.

"Fred," exclaimed she, "I see hell and devils dancing round me; and there's my poor old mother trying to scare them off! Ha, they'll have me—they'll have me! Help! help!"

Tears were streaming down the cheeks of the now sober Frederick. But he was awe-struck with the death-scene of her he loved. For a few moments Edith was hushed—all was still. The dim gray light had just begun to render the flame of the candle ghastly. The clock chimed four, and again all was repose.

"Oh God," exclaimed Edith, vainly attempting to rise. "God help and pardon me! Father of mercy! Fred, Fred—look at me, and repent. God of Heaven—" At this moment she fell down on the bed—blood was gushing from her mouth and nostrils—there was a faint gurgling hiccup—a slight tremor of the flesh—and again all was still.

Neither Dr. Percival nor Frederick spoke a word. They were silent and dismayed; humbled in spirit and in heart at witnessing the last scene in the Life of a Beauty.

Reader, my tale is done. Would to God that I might have painted out the death-bed of a repentant sinner: but truth must take the place of fiction; and I leave it to the novelist to portray what experience rarely sees. My readers of the fair sex may charge me with violating the duties of society, in dragging forward the dark features I have outlined. Alas!

nearly one-twelfth portion of their number in this great metropolis are as lost, as fallen as Edith Hamilton. And must the scenes of incarnate horror—the impenitent death-beds—the thousands plunging into eternity without one effort to save them—must all these scenes of awful wretchedness be veiled for ever? No, lady the wound must be laid bare—it must be probed and cauterized, or it can never be healed. The Christian must light the lamp of active charity, and search diligently for the lost pieces of silver,—those souls lost in moral darkness and destitution. And vice too must be painted without the false sophistry of the novelist, or it can never make the soul recoil with horror.

There is a plague-spot upon society—corroding and cankering its very vitals—fostered by its indulgences, and undiminished by its punishments. The young and the lovely wither beneath its blight, and all around them are contaminated by its influence. How few are they who cannot tell of a daughter or a friend undone, a son or a neighbor led into ruin by the fearful fascination of some erring beauty? Alas that human nature should be so fallen! but so it is. The ruin of woman's honor fills the earth with sin, and hell with victims. Legislation can afford no remedy. The only corrective is in a moral education. I would teach every Christian mother, that she may weave around her child a bulwark more impregnable than hardened steel—that virtue, as a principle of action, will place around her child a defence like a circle of living fire, disarming the libertine, and disarming the vicious. I would tell her that an empty mind can ill withstand the attacks of the tempter; that in the long catalogue of female ruin, but few are found who have been distinguished for moral or intellectual cultivation. I would have her teach her child, that happiness is only compatible with goodness, that a swerving from rectitude is a voluntary embracing of misery and death; that vice is never so deadly as when arrayed in the colors of virtue; and that the first moment when she can look on vice without detestation she is lost for ever. I know my words may appear superfluous; but when I think upon the thousands hurrying on in their career of sin—when I think how the daughter of a house is its honor and its grace—when I think of the father and mother that loved her—the brother who made her his pride, and the sister on whose bosom she slept—how all of them are utterly lost and dishonored by a daughter's degradation—when I think of these things—that I am writing to assist in the cause of woman's redemption—that I am seeking to gather souls from among the tares that have choked them—I feel that could I dip my pen in everlasting fire, and trace my thoughts in words of burning, they would even then be far from extravagant.

That a record of truth may awaken one to forgiveness—that it may lead many to HIM who condemned not, but bade the sinner sin no more—that it may affect the heart with something deeper than a mere passing influence, is the earnest and unvarying prayer of

FOR.

For the National Era.

RETRIBUTION.

BY MRS. EMMA D. E. SOUTHWORTH.

[CONTINUED.]

You have doubtless heard the story of that clever artist, who painted a monster, the image of nothing that is in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. You have heard how, seeing his failure in the portraiture, he was constrained to write under the monster the name of the intended animal; how, his chirography being quite as bad as his painting, he was lastly compelled to walk up to the picture, and placing his finger upon the mysterious hieroglyphics under the supernatural beast, enlighten his audience by reading—"This is a horse!" Yet you have not charged the monstrosity of the sketch upon the living model, but upon the unskilful artist.

Well! The people with whose history I have been trying to amuse you, really "lived, and moved, and had their being;" really loved, and sinned, and suffered, in this veritable world of ours.

But their portraits, with which you are presented, are, it is to be feared, somewhat distorted by the haste with which they are drawn.

Of Juliette Summers I could not have spoken in language too strong. I know I have failed in portraying the power of the strange fascination this beautiful and dangerous woman possessed over all she approached. I have often thought, that had she been in one of the courts of Europe, near the person of any reigning monarch, she would have ruled the nation, or overturned the Government. Yet there had been a time, not five years before, when Juliette Summers had been innocent, guileless, and disinterested. The angel had fallen before she was presented to the reader.

In thinking of her character, I think of the "excess of glory obscured," of "Lucifer, son of the morning," whose favorite daughter she was. I call her the incarnation of the Beauty of Evil. In thinking of her, in relation to Ernest Dent, I am reminded of the messenger sent to buffet the apostle, of the beautiful fiend commissioned to tempt the saint. You cannot abhor Juliette the temptress too much; yet, if you had fallen into her company, you would have been fascinated, charmed, mesmerized.

And Ernest Dent, her dupe and victim. Does he appear to you to be an arrogant, selfish, and self-righteous hypocrite?

If so, it is because I have drawn his portrait of charcoal; or rather, through haste, I have given his actions without explanation.

Ernest Dent, at the time of falling into the power of this dangerous beauty, was, in some respects, almost as unsophisticated as Hester herself. Living a simple, recluse, pastoral life, with his father, among the people whose welfare was the one object and interest of his life—entirely cut off from female society, his naturally strong but dormant passions had never been aroused, up to the time of his meeting with Juliette Summers. His soul resembled a deep, calm sea. His love for Hester had pleasantly agitated the surface of the waters, like a sweet south breeze. His passion for Juliette had troubled the depths of his soul, had lashed that sea into a furious tempest.

Ernest Dent was no hypocrite, but a self-confident and self-deceived man. With the theory of a stern morality ever in his ears and on his tongue, with the practice of a stern morality habitually and externally in his life, he believed its spirit to be in his heart as well. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" is as much the language of untried integrity now, as it was three thousand years ago.

An adept in physical science, a master in national policy, Ernest Dent was yet a tyro in the knowledge of human nature—aye, even of his own nature; so that he fell an easy victim to the arts of a woman like Juliette Summers.

Miss Summers was domiciliated with Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny. Having nothing on earth to amuse herself withal, she turned her evil "eyes, that could not cease from sinning," upon Marcus.

Mr. Derby's handsome black eyebrows sat upon a ridge, a cliff, a peak! His perceptive faculties were sharply developed—he was not easily duped. But now he had no common antagonist. At the end of a fortnight, all his foregone conclusions were dissipated, all his prejudices shaken. At the end of a month, he was completely bewitched, bewildered, bedeviled, victimized; and it took Juliette Summers, with her sweet, clear, mellifluous voice, and midnight eyes and mesmerizing manners, to do it thoroughly.

One morning, when Miss Summers had been a guest at Rock Spring about six weeks, Fanny Gales came running into her aunt's room, and throwing herself into a chair, burst into tears, and exclaimed—

"Aunt Huldah! dear aunt Huldah! I am perfectly miserable, and I wish I were dead!"

The old lady dropped her knitting, adjusted her spectacles, and looked steadily and reprovingly at her niece.

"Yes, I do! I do so wish it! Marcus does not care for me now. He is all the time with Juliette. All the time! Oh dear!" sobbing. "I wish I could die and break his heart; I do so."

"My dear child! My poor Fanny!" said the old lady, tenderly. "You are jealous; you should not be jealous."

"A saint would be jealous! an angel would! to see the way in which he acts. He treats me as indifferently as possible. It is often, 'Fanny, get out of my way;' and 'Fanny, don't bother me;' and 'Fanny, please to let me alone, I want to fix this for Miss Summers;' and often, when we are sitting together, he will get up, and, yawning in my face, ask me, 'Fanny, where is Miss Summers?' take his hat and leave the room. He does not seem to think it worth while to disguise his sentiments towards Miss Summers, even to save my feelings."

"Oh Fanny, my dear! How 'green-eyed' you do look at things. Why, by your own account, the very openness of his attentions, of which you complain, shows that there is no consciousness of infidelity in him. Oh no, Fanny; these are only the civilities due to her as a woman, an orphan, and our guest."

"Dear Aunt Huldah, you sit mewed up here all day, and you do not see! If you only knew! What do you suppose, for instance, that they are doing now? Why, Juliette is sitting at the piano, playing, and Marcus is bending over her, and both are singing that impassioned love song of Mozart, 'Am I not fondly thine own?' You should hear Juliette; she sung as if her heart gushed through every tone—and you should have seen Marcus when they came to the words—

"Then! then! then! e'en as I love thee,
Say! say! wilt thou love me?"

You should have seen Marcus; he actually sunk upon his knees at her side, gazing up into her face with a look of such adoration! such worship! Oh! I wish I was in heaven, I do so!"

"Where were you when this was going on, Miss Fanny?"

"I?" said Fanny, blushing deeply, "peeping through the chink of the folding doors."

"Wrong, Fanny."

The old lady mused a good while. Fanny sat sobbing and sighing; at last she said—

"What shall I do, Aunt Huldah?"

"Fanny, my dear, the Scriptures are a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path—a sure guide in every possible emergency. Consult them always, Fanny."

"But, dear Aunt Huldah, in this case?"

"Get your Bible, and turn to Matthew, 18th chapter and 15th verse, and read."

Fanny took down the Bible, and, more from curiosity to see what it would say upon the subject than from any other motive, turned to the text in question, and read—

"If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

"That is the best way," said the old lady, seriously. "Ah! if people would always do so! Many a heart that is withering under a sense of injustice and suspicion would rejoice thus to be put upon its trial—would rejoice to be treated with the fair dealing extended to a felon, instead of being condemned and sentenced unheard."

"Go to Marcus, and tell him what annoys you. You are his betrothed. The scene you witnessed just now might have been the mere impulse of an emotion—the effect of the music and poetry. You must not expect too much of human nature, Fanny—And oh! Fanny, of all things, do not cultivate jealousy. Jealousy never prevents but frequently suggests the very infidelity that it fears."

Fanny bathed her eyes, smoothed her curls, adjusted her dress, and went in search of Marcus. It was a beautiful morning for the season. Several "hands" were in the garden, doing up the flower-beds. Miss Summers was superintending one of them. Marcus was in the small closet, opening on the piazza, in which dried herbs, flower seeds, and roots, and such things, were kept. He seemed to be very busy among the bulbous. Fanny went up to him, and, being at an utter loss how to proceed in arraiguing her culprit, and

reading the indictment, she stood some time in silence by his side. He was too much occupied to notice her. At last, impatient at herself, as well as at him, she tossed her pretty head, with all its golden curls, and said—

"I have a crow to pick with you, Marcus. I have so—one of the blackest of crows—so come along, and sit down on the bench, and help me to pick it."

"Oh! Fanny, don't bother! I'm busy," said Marcus, assorting some tulip roots.

"And always are! But, Marcus, I must and will have a talk with you—so there! Come, now! I won't be put off."

"Well; talk fast, for I want to set out some tulips and double hyacinth roots for Miss Summers," said Marcus, as, impatiently sitting himself down, and spreading a handkerchief over his knees, he commenced intently selecting and assorting the roots, talking all the time—

"Let's see—double white—talk on, Fanny—double carnation—rainbow tulip—do make haste, Fanny; I'm in a hurry—double pink!"

"Double tongue! double heart! double deal—or!" exclaimed Fanny, thoroughly exasperated.

"Hey! what's the matter now? What's put you out, Fanny?" exclaimed Marcus, suddenly waking up. "Has the sponge-cake burned? has the custard curdled? have last year's preserves fermented, or what?"

By this time, Fanny's cheek was flushed to crimson, and her eyes were flashing fire, as, with a proud and scornful air, she drew a ring from her finger, and, holding it out towards him, said—

"Only this, Mr. Derby. About a year ago you did me the honor of placing this little ring upon my finger, raving at the same time about eternal love and truth. You promised more than you could perform, sir! Take back your ring and pledge!"

Casting the ring upon the ground, she turned and entered the house.

"I'll sue you for a breach of marriage-promise," shouted Marcus after her, as he picked up the ring; "fetch me if I don't!"

With all his foibles, Marcus was conscientious. He had been following a blind impulse all this time. He was brought up all standing by this short interview with Fanny. He followed her into the house, but she had taken shelter in Aunt Huldah's room. He scratched his head, and thumped his forehead, he "pshawed" and grumbled, and finally saddled his horse, and rode off to the post office, a frequent resort of Marcus in times of trouble or of ennui. He did not return that morning.

The family sat down to dinner. Miss Huldah was grave—Fanny indignant—Juliette seemed the only cheerful, easy, and self-possessed member of the party. But was Juliette really cheerful? She might have been, for any compunction that she now felt for her perfidy, either to Hester or to Fanny. But Miss Summers had grave causes of anxiety. She had been advised by Mr. Jenkins that Hester Dent's deed of gift of ten thousand dollars to her was null and void; the last eagle was changed in her purse; her wardrobe—her magazine of artillery—sadly in want of replenishment; the days of her visit dwindling to the shortest span—and no arrangement made for her future. The uncertainty of her future life; her utter abhorrence of being a governess; her tormenting doubts of her lover's constancy; her fears lest, while removed from her spell, he should be attracted by some beauty in Washington, who should finally supplant her in his heart—these drove sleep from her pillow at night, and peace from her mind by day. And her sentiment for Ernest Dent, that had been a queer mixture of superficial admiration, of vanity and ambition, was now, by the pressure of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, deepening into a passion—a selfish and calculating passion, it is true—for she regarded Colonel Dent as the only being able and willing to raise her to the rank to which she aspired, invest her with the wealth that she coveted, and supply her with the elegances, luxuries, and attendance, that habit had rendered indispensable to her comfort—and she adored him accordingly.

That very evening, as Miss Summers was seated alone in the parlor, a servant opened the door, and named—

"Colonel Dent!"

And in another moment Ernest Dent was standing before her—holding both her hands, gazing into her eyes. He spoke no word, but that impassioned gaze was eloquent! She, too, was still and silent—she felt her strength all going—he seemed to have the spell to wile it from her—no other man on earth possessed this power for her. Still holding her hands, and gazing on her face as if every sense were rapt in ecstasy, at length he spoke—

"My Juliette!"

Oh! the tenderness, pathos, and passion, with which he uttered that one word, "Juliette!" His tongue lingered on the name, as though the letters syllabated a sound conveying more of joy and of poetry than any form of letters could. He sank into a seat by her side—he passed his arm around her waist, and drew her graceful head, with its wealth of soft, black, shining ringlets, down upon his bosom, gazing into her eyes, and murmuring under his breath—

"Most beautiful! Most beautiful! Vision of joy! Do I hold you to my heart at last!"

And Juliette! she had whispered one word—"Ernest!"—and her eyes had closed, as under a spell of mesmerism, when he drew her upon his bosom, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her glowing lips, exclaiming the while, in low, earnest tones—

"My star! my beauty! my life! my hope! my joy! my dream of heaven!—Juliette!"

Thus his tongue luxuriated on her very name. He was delirious, rapt—no wonder, when the lightest tone of Juliette's voice had power to stop the blood in his heart, or send it flying through his veins—when the lightest glance of Juliette's eyes, meeting his own, had a spell to arrest the course of memory and thought in his brain—when the softest touch of Juliette's hand was like a galvanic battery on his nerves, except in this, that the shock was ecstasy.

"Dearest Ernest, I feared you had forgotten me," whispered Juliette, after a few moments.

"Forgotten you, my bird of heaven! forgotten you! Why, I have forgotten everything else!"

And he strained her to his bosom, and kissed her passionately again. I do not know how long he held her thus—I do not know how high his delirium reached—but,

"My bright, bright Juliette!" at length he said, "I have a mission to Paris. I shall sail in a month. I cannot leave you behind. You must go with me. 'My Queen of Beauty and of Love,' you will go. Speak, and tell me that you will."

"But this is sudden, dearest Ernest—and I—I am bewildered with this surprise."

"My Juliette!—I manoeuvred to get this appointment for the very purpose of having an excuse to hurry our marriage. I stooped to this for your sweet sake, Juliette. For myself, without this, I would have gathered you to my bosom in the face of the whole world; but for you, my cherished love! I would not have the slightest breath of censure soil the plumage of my Bird of Heaven!"

She smiled, and attempted to lift her head from his bosom. He drew the graceful form closer within his arms, and rested the beautiful face against his bosom. She raised her eyes to his countenance. His eyes were riveted upon her. Her eyelids fell beneath his gaze; she was mesmerized again, while he pressed impassioned kisses upon her forehead, lips, and eyes—exclaiming, all the while,

"This is joy! this is rapture! this is ecstasy! this is heaven!—Juliette!"

He was scarcely a responsible moral agent—he was insane—a monomaniac—a man with one idea—Juliette.

Enough of this scene. Before the close of it, he had received her promise to become his wife within three weeks.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

SOME ELDERLY PEOPLE AND THEIR YOUNG FRIENDS.

CHAPTER VII.

She complained to him with tears that anyone so sweet and charming as Jemima should have to wait and wonder—this being her inexact and superficial manner of alluding to the uncertainty of a declaration of love.

"In the dear old days," began Tom, who, truth to speak, could be sufficiently tiresome on this subject even to warrant inattention on the part of his hearers, "in the dear old days she waited, and was too modest to wonder."

"In the dearer and older days," said Clemmie, "she used to be acquired by purchase. Tom, dear, why is it that men never seem to be very satisfied with women, and yet nothing puts them out so much as the thought of any change in them. They tremble at the words 'New Woman.'"

"I believe," said Tom with a badly done air of being sententious, "that women have altered very little since the world began."

"If I liked," said Clementine darkly, "I could tell you heaps."

"I have no doubt of it."

"I will tell you a little story if you like. You know, Tom, I have a club

for the girls at Erling Magna. There are some rough ones in the factory there whom I dearly love. But when they come to my girls' club I tell them they must not thump young men on the back and then run away, because in girls' clubs that sort of thing isn't allowed."

"I didn't know you had so much sense, Clemmie."

"I had to reprove one of them the other day, and she said to me, 'It is all very well, miss; you may not like it, but how else is a poor girl to get engaged?' . . . In society we cannot thump young men on the back and then run away."

"It would shock me very much to know that you had any particular System," said Mr. Beamish.

She protested. "Instinct is never systematized, it is not even an acknowledged fashion, because if it were we should soon be Found Out."

Mr. Beamish pointed out to her laboriously that he knew for a fact that many otherwise perfectly nice girls often go to dances or parties to meet one particular man who is to be there, and that, much as they wish to

**Aristodemocracy*, p. 6, by Sir Charles Waldstein.

speak to him, they frequently pretend that they do not see him.

"When we have got over the surprise which an encounter gives us," said Clemmie, "we frequently say we are leaving directly. It is a mere matter of form."

"I have heard others, whose plans were settled, say with every appearance of truth that they had no idea where they were going to spend Sunday."

"We do change our plans pretty often," said Clemmie, "and some day hostesses will be swept out of existence by it, and then we shall be sorry."

"Country house visits," said Mr. Beamish, "have altered since that odious word 'week-end' crept into them, and 'house-party' is worse, because it is pretentious as well as ridiculous. If you stay in a house you are naturally a house-party."

"By the way," interrupted Clementine, "do you know that Miss Crawley is going to take a house for the summer, and that I have been deputed to look out for one for her? I'm trying to get her something down near us."

"Miss Crawley is tired," Mr. Beamish said, "and ought to be out of London."

"Besides which, she thinks it would make a break in this endless illness of Mr. Darling's," said Clemmie. "So long as Mrs. Darling and her family and servants can be induced to carry up trays, so long will Mr. Darling remain in bed."

"It's a most contemptible business altogether," said Tom. "It is wearing out Annette and ruining Julia, and yet so convinced are these excellent women of their duty to a husband——"

"Obedience is a good principle but a bad habit," remarked Clementine sagely.

"Now, Clemmie, you borrow those things from Jacquetta, and I won't have them said in my house."

"Jacquetta would say that there was

a crude idealism in my remark, whereas you, poor dear, don't even understand it."

"What were you saying about Jemima?" said Tom.

She took out her little pocket-handkerchief and sniffed dolorously, and then decided to be practical and not to cry about Jim, however thin she was. To put away the handkerchief required a search in every fold of her dress, and at last it disappeared somewhere in the region of her very smart pair of shoes.

"I'll give women the vote when they learn to dress themselves sensibly," said Tom, watching her efforts with an air of overdone cynicism.

"You'll give them nothing at all when they dress sensibly," said his niece. "The amount of instruction which men require in these matters is simply colossal."

"Charlton is a selfish fellow," said Tom.

"He's worse than that," she replied sadly. "I'm afraid he's a remarkably clever fellow, and the worst of it is he understands Jim."

"I know I am behind the world," said Tom, "but I thought what women wanted was to be understood."

She shook her head at him and said, "They want to be misunderstood and then pitied for it. Now, Mr. Charlton knows that Jim is clever and intellectual, and he reads unpublished poems to her—I know he does that, because I caught him at it last Sunday down at Burbridge."

"Published poems are bad enough," said Tom; "what unpublished poems can be like I really have no idea."

"If you are intellectual you only like unpublished poems which other people haven't had the chance of reading. You can say afterwards, 'I read them before they came out.'"

"An enormous advantage."

"Worse than that, he has got the

fatal habit which only a few charming men know, of leading you into a corner of the garden on a hot Sunday afternoon and producing a packet of letters from a delightful masculine pocket which we haven't got, and reading them aloud to one, or handing them over one by one."

"It sounds a very confidential proceeding."

"Oh, but confidential! It's simply thrilling!" said Clemmie, "and if only men thoroughly understood how to be charming they'd do it every Sunday afternoon without stopping, and just sandwich in a few unpublished poems to give the thing the intellectual flavor which it requires."

"You know far too much about these things, Clemmie."

"Dearest," she said, "if you knew All, I could astonish you!"

He would like to have heard more, but for the sake of Clemmie's morals he again led the subject back to Mr. Charlton, and his love affair, though not without the sententious touch which he always believed to be particularly suited to the young lady.

"You are all half engaged for a year or so, and your best friends are the men whom last night you refused to marry, and you write affectionate letters to half the men of your acquaintance, whereas in your mother's day you were not allowed to write and ask a man to dinner." Once started, Tom determined to hold the conversation for a time in his own hands. The subject was one which he enjoyed and to which he was well accustomed and he always said exactly the same things about it.

"A woman in my days," he continued, "was content with her home and her children and her husband. She didn't run about and visit, and interfere with politics, and she was content with household duties which fully engaged her, and she never interfered with men's business."

Clemmie had a gushing accent which left out all her "r's" and had a caressing sound about it.

"How too *dahling* of her!" she said.

"We married them, anyway!" said Tom fiercely.

"There are pasts, I know, in most men's lives," said Clementine. "Tom, how many——?"

He got up and walked to the window again, and when he returned to the sofa the subject of Mr. Charlton was in full swing again. Jim was eating pounds of Sanatogen, and had dark rims under her eyes, and poor Edgar was going through a course of Ibsen's plays, and not flourishing upon them.

"It's a poor sad world after all," said Clemmie, sighing from the very tips of her shoes.

"It would be better for everyone to leave London for a bit, and get away down to the country."

"Julia Crawley will open a sort of Home for Incurables at once," said Miss Beamish, "for Julia is that sort of person. She will have Mrs. Darling down to stay because she is her sister and because she is overworked, and she will have Jim because Jim's love affairs are not prospering; she will have various other people for various charitable reasons, and she will never fill the house too full, or forget who is coming, or fail to meet them at the local railway station. . . . Uncle Tom, I believe I'll get her to take Dobb's Hall, the Jennings' old place. It is quite pretty, you know, and not too large, and I can look after you all and try to prevent Miss Crawley turning the heads of every tradesman in the village."

She tied a knot in her pocket-handkerchief and said, "Remind me to speak to the Jennings; their son's debts at Oxford have been enormous, and Julia will be sure to give a lavish rent. Meantime, I am going to see the darlings."

"There has been a motor car waiting

at the door for the last hour," said Tom.

She could not believe it possible, and now half a dozen engagements would have to be given up, but the visit to Kensington was imperative, and there was the Bedford's dance to arrange. She begged Tom to excuse her, waited for a cup of tea, and fled.

"She means well, poor child," said Mr. Beamish.

Miss Darling was in bed when she reached the house about six o'clock. It was the one moment in the day in which she ever rested. She used to light an electric lamp in her rather dark room, and put on a mob cap of lace and ribbons, and write countless notes which she strewed on the counterpane when she had finished, and she also saw her women friends who called. At this time of day, too, she tried the many cures which were imposed upon her and the many treatments which her friends recommended. The hour between six and seven was called her rest cure.

Clementine sat on the edge of the bed and declared her intention of not talking, but Jemima interested her as she did everyone, and the two girls were soon in a pleasant feast of talk. Jim knew everything about everybody; her acquaintance was large, and half the world confided in her. Most people sent her the latest books, and a large percentage of her friends seemed unable even to go to seaside lodgings without her recommendation.

After Clemmie arrived she added the finishing touch to several notes, dispatched them to catch the post, and then listened to plans.

The first thing that had to be settled was Mrs. Bedford's dance, and Miss Darling would like to know how many people her friend was taking to it. "We can do very little in that way, as you know, but Aunt Julia is having sixteen or eighteen guests. She has asked Edgar."

"You can always say you have a headache at the last moment," said Miss Beamish. "Mr. Charlton is coming to us, although Uncle Tom doesn't approve of him."

"So you know quite well I shan't have a headache," said Jim drily. "A few loyal friends are still wondering whether I mean to marry Mr. Charlton or not."

"It has always been a puzzle to me," said Clementine, "why some people's love affairs are always public, and others' seem to be conducted in a manner so retired as to be almost clandestine. In your own case, Jemima, you were born a public character, while Mr. Charlton has had publicity thrust upon him."

"I suppose the penalty of living in the world is that one must lend oneself to one's friends as a subject for discussion. Tell me, Clemmie, is it glaringly obvious that I care for Mr. Charlton?"

In order to administer the soothing which Jemima too evidently required, Miss Beamish said stoutly, "Self-consciousness in love affairs, dear Jim, is very like the uncomfortable feeling that people get when their hair doesn't quite match, or when the waiting is going all wrong at their parties. Nobody really notices it except themselves."

"We say that to console ourselves."

"London is a big place."

"It is a lot of little parishes," said Jim impatiently, "and my affairs are being frequently discussed at the symbolic village pump. It is the fashion of the day, and no one goes away and suffers in silence."

"We live an open-air sort of existence, don't we?" said Miss Beamish, smiling.

"We don't even lock our skeletons away now," Jim went on. "We bring them out and make them rattle their bones to amuse our friends."

"It is by far the frankest way to

behave towards a skeleton," said Clemmie, thinking of Mr. Darling, whose character she had heard discussed by his daughters for many years past.

"Oh, poor Papa!" said Jim, shrugging her shoulders and following her friend's train of thoughts; "he really would have become a sort of ghost haunting the house and frightening everyone into fits if we hadn't opened the door and shown that a skeleton is merely out of place at feasts."

"Mr. Charlton has accepted for the dance."

"Yes, he told me he was going."

"Do you get letters from him every day? Great men always write a great deal, don't they? and after their deaths the letters are published and one wonders how it was they ever were called great."

"They were suitable for the moment, I suppose; most lovers seem rather foolish to the outside world, especially when they are serious."

"Still they needn't have quite such idiotic names for each other. When a man calls his lady-love 'Kitten,' 'Tootie,' or 'Queen' he is bound to be famous or else to get into the Divorce Court. Have you got something resplendent for the dance?"

"Jack is laying up for herself treasures in heaven by spending her earnings with her usual lavishness on me. She probably will spend her old age in a garret."

Clementine sighed. It was difficult to control the banking account of so independent a young woman as Jack, but Clemmie began to feel the weight of her own pretty dress burdensome, and tried to crush its frills and laces as she sat on the edge of the bed.

She said to the lady in the cap. "Won't it make it rather awkward for you having both men at the dance?"

And Jemima gave a sigh and said,

"Oh, no, it doesn't matter in the least. I often see Edgar."

Nevertheless, when the night of Mrs. Bedford's ball arrived she was late for Miss Crawley's dinner-party, and impatient with the guests who were all stupid and dull. Miss Crawley was far too kind to be a really successful hostess, and only excelled in the matter of inviting old friends and in providing good dinners. Edgar Burrows was there and his sister, a large, young girl with immense white satin feet; some nice-looking youths whom Miss Crawley called "dancing men" in much the same way as she talked of dancing bears; and two or three married couples. None of them belonged to Jemima's own coterie of friends, and she wished impatiently that Tom Beamish had asked her to dine with him. Clemmie, she told herself, always had the right sort of people, and she wondered whether Mr. Charlton had taken her in to dinner. Once, as she waited in the drawing-room, she heard through the open windows on the other side of the street the sound of laughter and of well-maintained conversation, and she braced herself to do the best she could for Miss Crawley's guests while reflecting on the waste of time that an uneventful dinner-party involves.

There is little doubt that however long an uncertain love affair may have run on, there comes the day or the night when a woman of any experience whatever is able to say to herself, "It will be tonight or not at all: either he will propose to me this afternoon or he will never propose." The lover himself may be quite unaware that this moment has been reached, but a woman hardly ever makes a mistake about it.

Jemima was excited and restless, and Edgar was far too solicitous of her comfort and her health, and irritated her by his frequent attentions. She would like to have been out under the

stars tonight, for it was a murky hot evening with thunder in the air, but even if she had been able to go for a walk in the Park it was crowded with people. The evenings were long and light now, and there was something garish about the idea of a ball. She talked conventionally to the man on either side of her at dinner, and helped to further the success of the party as was her wont. She was aware that Jaquetta on the other side of the table was admiring her immensely and getting a rare amount of happiness out of her new silk ball dress. She knew her aunt regarded her as a brilliant woman of the world, and she knew also that Edgar Burrows was watching her with a certain famished expression in his eyes which she determined to ignore. The other guests at the table hardly entered her consciousness at all. She remembered that Edgar had often spoken about his sister, and that she herself had often wondered what Dorothy, as a future sister-in-law, would be like. She told herself now impatiently that the young girl was irritatingly commonplace, and that her hair was very badly done.

Alas! poor Dorothy was prepared at sight to bestow an enormous amount of admiration upon Miss Darling, and Jim began to feel even her universal popularity irksome. Girls nearly always adored her and took up a great deal of her time, and tonight she had a feverish desire to lock the door on everything except her own concerns. Dorothy sat near her after dinner, and talked eagerly about Edgar and the country village whence she came. A new line of motor buses had lately brought the village much nearer the rest of the world than before, and the young lady spoke long and eloquently on the subject. She gave the exact price of the fares into Mirwen, and stated that the bus met the 4.30 train. Edgar relieved her from his sister's

well-meant attentions when he returned from the dining-room, but Edgar's mood was too near her own tonight to be of any comfort to her. She looked at his tragic eyes and said to herself many times, "He will get over it," and she longed with all her might to get out of her aunt's prosaic circle of friends and away from the comfortable drawing-room and the platitudes which were being talked there, even to exchange them for a hard seat behind the grille of the House of Commons. She had managed everyone's affairs for them all her life, and now she was managing affairs of State, or at least Charlton allowed her to think so. He told her many things before they were generally known and before the Press had published them, and Jemima was a politician now to her finger-tips. Once she had ventured on a little wire-pulling and had been successful. She had hardly realized before how much her good looks and good dressing counted in the world of men. Some savings she had, had long ago been taken from the bank and spent on dress and the various expenses of fashionable life. Once she had spent Sunday with Mr. Charlton's mother, and there had been a crowd of political people there at his beautiful place in the country. It was the right house at which to be seen, and it began to be an accepted thing that where Mr. Charlton was invited Miss Darling was also a guest.

At night time, during the sleepless hours when she was far too tired to rest, she began to feel all the intoxication of entering a new existence, of which before she had only dreamed. All sorts of possibilities rose up before her, her imagination became abnormally keen, and the delights of dreaming of splendid things in store was far better worth having than sleep. The constant talk about her ill-health wearied her; she seldom felt ill, and if she

had done so the pleasure of life was well worth it. To drive home after an evening party, and to realize to the full all that that party had meant to her, made her return home through the lighted streets, a bewildering fantasy of thoughts and of triumphs.

Jacquetta, returning home after writing dramatic criticisms at an office where a boy waited for slips as she wrote them, and where she ate toast and grilled bacon at two o'clock in the morning, began to find that her sister was generally out long after she herself had returned. Each of the girls had a latchkey, and for each a candle used to be placed on the hall table: the one who took the last candle locked the hall door. Sometimes when Jacquetta was more than usually late, she would think that the candle must have been forgotten, and on her way up to bed she would look into Jemima's dark room and find it empty.

"We are all beginning to live at last," Jacquetta would say, going up a further flight of stairs past the door of her father's sick-room, with its lighted lamp, to her own room. "Well, anything is better than being dull!"

Jacquetta was strong; moreover it was her pleasure to take her young brother for a walk every afternoon, and this practice was good for her health and spirits. Tony's artless prattle, which never rose beyond very childish remarks, rested her tired brain wholesomely. She liked the dragging weight of the child at her hand, and she and Tony thoroughly understood each other. She always answered his questions even when he asked them over and over again. When he got tired of doing this, she could always be prevailed upon to tell him stories.

Tonight Tony was in bed with a bilious attack, and Jacquetta decided not to go to the ball but to return to Kensington after dinner. She went and sat with her father, who had

tried to be on friendly terms with her ever since he entered the house, and then found that Tony was restless and required the whole of her attention. First of all, he had made up his mind that the only place where he could sleep was in his sister's room, and having established himself there, he informed her that in taking care of his health and its many grievous symptoms, he had omitted his usual religious exercises. It would comfort him, he told her, if he might say his prayers to her. Jacquetta had not known how many sick relatives she and her brother had between them, and how many people there are in this world who can fitly be described as poo-oor, until the little boy began to make his evening petitions for them. His kind thoughts led him first to heathen lands afar, and then to the London children who had no hot baths at night. Afterwards came prolonged descriptions of most of the ailments of relatives and friends, and Jacquetta listened patiently while he interceded for "poo-oor Jemima who doesn't sleep well, and poo-oor Mummy who is so tired," and an aunt at Brighton who, it seems, was afflicted with gout in one of her legs, and it ended up in Anthony saying, with closed eyes and in a tone of relief as his prayers came to an end, "And bless poo-oor father, who is fairly well at present." She kissed him when he had finished and tucked him up in her bed.

"Do you think you will be going out in the middle of the night tonight, Jack?"

"No, Tony, I am sure I shan't."

"I hope you won't kick."

"Well, Tony, I hope the same thing about you."

"It is so important I should get a little undisturbed sleep," he said, "and I am glad you didn't go to the ball."

She told him as a secret that he was

quite her ownest, and that adoration of little boys was very apt to unhinge the female mind.

Jemima, meanwhile, had gone to the ball.

Mrs. Bedford was a good hostess, and even the young people were satisfied with her entertainment. She knew perhaps, half the company assembled in her own drawing-room, but she had what the older and more experienced girls called, a little vulgarly, the "right men." Also her floor was very shiny, and the band was good. Her guests came in parties of ten, twelve, or twenty, and introduced their friends to her at the top of the staircase. Like most things grown too large to be handled in a bulk, her ball suffered from disintegration and was broken up into lesser groups and companies. These were on speaking terms with each other while carefully maintaining their own integrity. Minor hostesses were jealous of strayings into other parties, and kept a watchful eye on those who had previously dined with them, and Jacquetta's economic basis for the government of the world was demonstrated afresh—those who had dined had to dance: those who merely supped in Mrs. Bedford's dining-room need not come upstairs at all. Most people were hastening to another popular dance given in the same Square, and there was a good deal of running backwards and forwards, and some keen criticism about the merits of the respective bands, suppers, and more particularly the strawberries. Most people ate heartily, without the excuse which hunger urges for indulging in the pleasures of the table, and although exercise was unattainable in the dense pack of the drawing-room, there was in the minds of most of the dancers an idea that their refreshments had been well earned.

Miss Crawley ushered her small party upstairs with a good deal of

inward discomfort. In her polite and innocent girlhood parties were taken to county balls but not to private houses, and while wishing to remain young both in thought and appearance, she found that to accommodate herself to new ideas of etiquette was one of the most difficult tasks of her life. A religious outlook might alter—it was indeed always altering—but manners, Miss Crawley believed, should be stereotyped.

Julia was not happy at the dance and thought she missed Tom who refused to come, for the simple and manly reason that he did not want to. Mr. Macpherson never danced but acted as escort and was distinguished enough to be received everywhere with a label which hostesses read in an aside as he passed up the room—"Mr. Macpherson, the new gas man: the King sent for him the other day: the greatest chemist of modern times," and so on. Fortunately the professor was unaware of the comment he provoked; he stood in doorways hoping for a draught, his thin fine yellow hair brushed off his forehead, and his eyes with their usual abstracted gaze fixed upon the room. He did not dream of dancing, and he was not of much use in other respects. It never occurred to him to suggest that he should take anyone to a passage filled with chairs and sit talking to her for ten minutes, and then return to the doorway again—though doubtless that would have been a useful and sociable proceeding on his part. He began instead to trace dancing back to its original meaning and to watch the crawling efforts of couples to get round the room, and to compare it with the dancing of ancient Greece. This interested him very much, but it did not contribute to the immediate success of Mrs. Bedford's dance.

Miss Crawley sat on a bench with her back to the wall, and with rather a sharp edge of beadwork in its wooden

decoration running into her back. She was nothing but a chaperon mounting guard over young people who did not require to be taken care of, and she felt the young lady of the big white satin feet very much on her mind. Not even her dinner guests seemed to care to risk collision with those immense and powerful toes. Dorothy brushed back her fair hair with her hands several times, and said nervously that she felt as if everyone was looking at her. To stand alone evidently gave her lively discomfort, and in desperation Julia sought out a few of her young men friends, and with as much hesitation as if she were asking them to dance with herself, she suggested an introduction to Miss Burrows. She found everyone in a hurry, or just going on to the Forsyths on the other side of the Square. Much humbled, she sought Mr. Macpherson in his doorway, and begged that he would take the unclaimed young lady for a little turn in the corridor or to have an ice.

"I am afraid that wouldn't be much fun for her," said Mr. Macpherson, but moved by her entreaties he led the young girl up and down during the period of two waltzes, and then her brother, who did not dance, came forward and led her up and down for two more. So Dorothy who was determined to be happy, and to say to young friends at home that she had enjoyed the dance enormously, prospered and was glad. After supper, and as the room got clearer, Miss Crawley succeeded better and was able to effect a few introductions, but until Dorothy was provided for she hardly liked to leave the ballroom.

Jemima was to be seen nowhere. She often disappeared for a whole evening at a dance, and could frequently be found in some small comfortable room reclining in a comfortable chair with a lot of pillows behind her and smoking cigarettes, while some

man in particular spent his entire evening with her and was always well entertained. Miss Crawley was sufficiently well educated by her nieces not to expect them to report themselves between dances, but she saw Edgar looking about him miserably, and knew that he was not the favored partner of the evening.

Miss Clementine Beamish was meanwhile giving her devoted Guardsman a thoroughly happy evening, and now she was seated behind a screen with both her hands in his and telling him that she adored him.

"But Clemmie, Clemmie darling, don't you know," said the young man, "that adoring me isn't going to be much good unless you mean to marry me. You see, I adore you so much that I never want to see you with any other fellow."

"Oh, but, Bobby dear, how dull!"

He had all sorts of delightful plans prepared for her. He and she would be married and they would settle down in the country, or he would exchange into a native regiment and they would go out to India together, or he would give up soldiering altogether and go into business and they would live in London together. There was only one word in the young man's life, and that was "together."

"Let it be yes or no," he pleaded. "Do let it be yes or no, Clemmie."

"But, Bobby dear, I can't make up my mind."

"You always say that."

"I never could, you know. It's my Weakness."

"You haven't got a weakness."

"Then it's my philosophic tendency."

"What is there so immensely difficult about saying 'yes' to me?" the young man said.

"Bobby, you did say 'yes' or 'no.'"

"But I meant 'yes.'"

He was rather importunate in his pleadings, and was very young, and

very sincere and devotedly in love.

"You see, Bobby," she said, "I'm so amazingly happy as I am."

"I love you to be happy," he said.

"But it's more than happiness," she said. "My uncle will probably tell you that I have far too good a time. And so I have; we all have! We have women friends whom we don't hate, and chaperons have become mere ornaments, like old china on the chimneypiece, and we order our horses when we like and go where we like and drive our own motor cars."

"But you do still fall in love, and as long as the world lasts I do believe you will still fall in love."

"Probably; but man isn't the Deliverer he used to be."

He said he would deliver her from every imaginable ill that could beset her, and that she would be ten thousand times happier with him than with anyone else.

"Most people think I'm a very firm and decided person," she said, "because I'm such a tyrant. They don't know how wobbly and undecided tyrants feel inside. My indecision of character will probably be my ruin, and I shall be left wondering whom I shall marry until there's no one left for me to choose from."

"Still, you don't say 'no,'" he said, clutching at straws.

She laughed, showing all her teeth in a certain radiant way she had, and said, "Oh, no, that would be far too decided for me!"

Bobby knew all her little ways, and he did not care in the least what she did or what she said so long as she was Clemmie. They sat in a passage together, and did not mind who looked at them, and they hardly lowered their voices to talk about their love affairs.

She told him quite frankly that she had enjoyed her evening immensely, and that he must not think for an in-

stant, even if she said "no," that she did not love him.

"That is what I can't understand," he began, "unless it is that you really think my father has been uncivil to you."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Shall I make him adore me, Bobby, or shall I cure him first of one or two obvious faults?"

"Oh, cure him," said the young man eagerly. "My father shoots foxes, and when he sits on the Bench the only people that he lets off easily are poachers."

"I think I shall keep a large book," said Clementine, "with all your father's faults written down in it while I remember them, and then they will act as a warning afterwards to you."

"It really would do him a lot of good," said Mr. Damer.

"He looks upon me as a burden on the estate," said Clemmie.

"Isn't it piffle?" he said, or whatever the slang term of the moment was for nonsense which he despised.

"—Or like sun-blinds and gas-brackets, which you take over at a valuation as fixtures."

"He can't be as bad as that," groaned poor Mr. Damer.

"I wonder, if he had not arranged our marriage when we were both in our cradles, if I would have said 'yes' long ago."

"Don't let the besotted acts of one old gentleman—" began Bobby, but she interrupted him saying:

"He has a despotic habit of mind."

"Which my dear mother has fostered," said Mr. Damer.

"Do you know, I am quite nice and mild unless some one sits heavily on me."

He breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the unfortunate Colonel Damer, and the young lady remarked that, black though that gentleman's record might be in the matter of

fixtures and chattels, she did not propose wasting any more of her evening by enumerating his backslidings.

"But you will write?" he said. "As soon as you have made up that great thing which you are pleased to call your mind you will write to me, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll write. It was clever of you, Bobby, to suggest such a thing. In a letter one cannot be undecided."

"That is the best of them," said Bobby.

"Bobby, where is Miss Crawley? The room is emptying fast, and she can't have gone home."

"I saw her a little while ago," Bobby replied. "She was forcibly leading young men up to Miss Burrows, who, I am afraid, does not know many people."

"Oh, but my poor dear Julia!" said Clemmie with compunction. "I believe we have neglected her shamefully."

"I believe she likes it," said Bobby easily.

"Well, it suits us to think so," she replied. "Do you know, Bobby, that she was once a beautiful woman?"

"She is a very handsome woman now," he said.

"Perhaps that makes it worse," said Clemmie tragically. "Bobby, her day is over. Doesn't that sound like a knell?"

"I suppose men don't see how awful that is," he said.

"She has loved, perhaps, and now love is an old memory. And she sits with her back to the wall or tries to get partners for girls at a dance. Why do they cut us off in our prime? It is only a convention that she should not be dancing with the rest of us."

"It must be pretty beastly to be middle-aged," said Bobby sympathetically.

"She sat against the wall until there was quite a painful stripe across her darling shoulders," went on Clemmie

still in the same tragic voice, "and quite elderly people took her into supper. But you know, none of us really look as well as she does, and I don't think we walk so well—perhaps it is because she still wears trains to her dresses. She takes a man's arm when she goes across the room and sails down a corridor. None of us sail. She has gracious manners, and her voice is beautiful when she talks, and she is only Miss Crawley taking girls to dances."

"I suppose we must all grow old some time," he said philosophically, "or else die. I would much rather grow old."

"I'd much rather die," said Clemmie decisively.

"I wonder if she could ever have married?" he ventured.

"I am afraid not; she had a very quiet girlhood, you know."

"I suppose fellows didn't find her interesting. Why is it?"

"The fact is I don't believe she has ever had a secret in her life."

Mrs. Bedford had a little sitting-room upstairs which she never threw open even on the night of a dance, and which no one but a mild-looking professor like Mr. Macpherson would ever have discovered. In this room in the dim light he knelt upon the carpet with a piece of a woman's brocade dress pressed to his lips, and he was saying, "Julia, I never loved any other woman but you, and never shall. If you should do me the great honor ever to return my love, it seems to me as if life could contain no greater happiness."

She was flushed, almost aghast, and loyal throughout everything.

"I never knew, I never knew!" she began eagerly, like a sensitive girl apologizing for having won a love which she can never return.

"You never knew," he said, "because you never know anything that is sweet and adorable about you. You

never know that you are the most beautiful woman that God ever made, and that when He created you He added all the sweet qualities which have made you so dear to me."

"How long ago?" she asked, looking back over the many years she had known him, and he interrupted her gently:

"I have loved you all my life. I think I made my Discovery for you, Julia, and just because I am a little bit in front of the other men who were looking for it, it has brought some distinction with it. It has brought me money, too, without which I could not have come to you."

She was touched by this, because she had so often heard her own handsome fortune talked of as an aid to her matrimonial prospects; but even as her heart responded to the tenderness of this appeal she remembered her old romantic readings of Tennyson, and told herself that "the shackles of an old love" restrained her. She always knew she would marry Tom some day, and she felt almost the perfidy of a broken faith towards him should she listen to what another man said. Always her thoughts had centered round the lover who had never proposed. Her future, which had once seemed endless, had diminished a little now, but when Tom made his appeal to her he would find her waiting and loyal as of yore.

"I mustn't think of it, I mustn't," she said, still bewildered, and speaking more quickly than she was wont to speak. She added disingenuously, "I am far too old to think about such things."

He put her hand to his lips again and laid it down—a lovely, shapely

(To be continued.)

white hand upon the brocade of her dress—and the action had an air of homage about it, very courteous and touched with chivalry.

"You have always been the inspiration of my life," he said. "I thank you for that."

The girls found her even in Mrs. Bedford's distant and unapproachable room, and they said that if she was really ready now they would like to go home, also they hoped she had not felt very tired, and Julia descended to the cloak-room and found their cloaks in a diminished heap that lay there. She took the younger members of her party back in her motor car, and saw to it that the others were safely dispatched home. In the cloak-room she had a message left to her to say that her niece had felt tired and had gone home early.

The summer sun was shining gloriously overhead and the birds were singing in the parks, and the sleepers on the Embankment or at the base of the Wellington Statue were stirring in their sleep by the time Mrs. Bedford's guests reached their respective homes. Miss Beamish, who had forgotten her latch-key, roused up her uncle's house, and was admitted at four o'clock in the morning and sent round a message by the chauffeur to the stables that she would ride at eight, and Miss Crawley let herself in and sat for one solid hour in front of her looking-glass wondering what had happened to her, and feeling fortified by the knowledge that she had been true to Tom.

And no one heard from Jemima whether she had enjoyed the ball or not.

S. Macnaughtan.

STORIES OF THE OLD HOME FARM

By C A Stephens

WE were expecting the old squire home for dinner. He had driven down to Portland three days before, to oversee the loading of a schooner with oak shooks for Matanzas, but said that if all went well he would be at home by noon of this day. When returning from his frequent trips to Portland he usually came up as far as Ricker's tavern, at Poland Spring, spent the night there, and, making an early start in the morning, reached home before noon. In the light wagon, with no load, Whitefoot often did the thirty miles in four hours.

At the old farm we called the midday meal dinner; it was our heartiest meal of the day, whereas supper at six o'clock was the lightest one.

"Late dinners," the old squire used to say, "are for the rich, who can afford to lie abed late mornings and sit up late nights. But country folks, who have to work, get weary by evening, and it is always bad to eat a hearty meal on a tired stomach and then go to bed."

But on this day the old squire had not reached home by noon. Halstead, Addison and I came in from the field and waited round until nearly one o'clock, for Grandmother Ruth did not like to sit down at table until the old squire came.

We were about to eat without him, however, when Ellen, who was at the door, saw him coming up the road below the lane. He was driving at a smart trot.

"But that isn't Whitefoot!" she exclaimed. "He's got a new horse!"

"Dear me, I do believe he's been swapping horses again!" grandmother said.

We all hastened out to the piazza as the old gentleman came tearing up the lane and drew rein at the door.

"I'm late," he said. "I was delayed down at the village. I was there an hour longer than I meant to be."

"Joseph, I do believe you have been trading horses again!" Grandmother Ruth exclaimed reprovingly.

The old squire did not deny the accusation. "But isn't he a beauty?" he said, as he gave the reins to Halstead and me.

A beauty he certainly was—a large, plump sorrel horse, with a coat like silk, a broad white face and pink nostrils. He was much handsomer and considerably larger than Whitefoot.

"He's a dandy!" Halstead exclaimed, as we unharnessed him. "Wonder how much boot grandfather had to give?"

When Halstead and I went in to dinner, grandmother, who was a little disturbed about the trade, was quizzing the old squire about it.

The old gentleman made no secret of it. "I happened to meet Senator Morrill down at Ricker's," he said. "We put up there last night. He liked the looks of Whitefoot pretty well, and, as I liked the looks of this one, we changed horses."

The old squire always said "changed" for "swapped," but we all knew what he meant.

"I dare say you paid him a lot of boot money," grandmother remarked.

"No," the old squire said, "not a penny."

"Well, then, there's something wrong with the horse!" the old lady exclaimed. "Needn't tell me you got the better of Senator Morrill in a horse trade."

"But what's our new horse's name?" Ellen asked.

We were all greatly

IV. WHISTLE.

amused when the old squire replied, "Senator Morrill told me his name was Whistle."

"'Whistle'!" grandmother cried. "Joseph, I'll wager that horse has got the heaves!"

"I don't think so. Senator Morrill assured me that the horse is sound. He had owned him only a year. The name was one that came with him, he said. He got him from a stranger at Augusta. I remember his words. 'Whistle,' he said, 'has nothing to do with his breathing.'"

Grandmother was not wholly convinced, and I had a fleeting notion that the old squire knew something about this new horse that he had not told us. He said nothing further, however.

Several weeks passed, during which time our admiration for Whistle increased steadily. He was, in truth, a splendid animal—kind, gentle, handsome; he would go like the wind, and you could leave him with perfect safety without hitching him. Moreover, he seemed afraid of nothing on the road, and never shied. The girls and grandmother began to think that at last we had got a perfect family horse that was safe for anyone to drive.

One forenoon early in July Addison drove over with Whistle to Lurvey's Mills on an errand about some lumber. The distance was little more than four miles, and we expected him back by one o'clock at the latest. Much to the surprise of Halstead and myself, who were hoeing potatoes that day and had expected Addison to help us, he did not return until nearly four o'clock.

When he arrived, Halstead accused him before the old squire of having gone fishing. Addison did not reply, but I saw him look hard at the old gentleman, and I thought he smiled in a peculiar way. But we got nothing out of him at the time; moreover, the old squire did not seem disposed to question him. I guessed that they had some secret between them, but never thought that it had anything to do with Whistle.

Toward the latter part of haying that season, three girls from the city, one of whom was a grandniece of Grandmother Ruth's, came to pass a fortnight at the old farm. They were very pleasant girls of about the same age as Theodora and Ellen, and we all came to like them very much. One of them in particular—the grandniece—was very lively and attractive; at least I thought so, and, unless I am much mistaken, Halstead and Addison were of the same opinion. We called her the "Four-Leaf-Clover Girl," because she was always looking for four-leaved clovers. Everywhere she went, in the fields or by the roadside, she watched in the grass for clover stems with four instead of three leaves.

When she found them,—and she found them where no one else could,—she would come and put them into our buttonholes. "To bring you luck," she would say, glancing archly up into our faces.

Halstead and I

were soon in an advanced stage of bashful admiration; and when at breakfast one morning Grandmother Ruth said that I must drive down to the village with Whistle to get a supply of groceries, and the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl spoke right up at table and said she wanted to go with me, I was happily flattered as well as flustered.

Halstead, I remember, kicked me under the table, but the others smiled broadly, and some even laughed outright at me. "See how red he is!" the other girls whispered; but the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl did not seem to care a grain for their teasing. She glanced at the old squire.

"Don't you wish you were going?" she cried to him merrily.

"I don't know but I do," the old squire said, smiling. "You make me think of your Great-Aunt Ruth when she was young."

At that the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl laughed merrily, and, running round behind grandmother's chair, gave her a hug and a kiss.

I hastened out to the stable to harness Whistle; but I had to wait for some time at the farmhouse door for the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl to get ready.

As I sat there in the wagon, quieting the impatient Whistle, the old squire came past and said with a smile, "Never mind, my son, it's a thing you will have to get used to—this waiting round for womenfolk to put on their things and come out. A man spends a considerable part of his life that way."

After going to the garden, the old gentleman came back and, glancing at Whistle, said, "If I were you, I should try to get back before noon. I think you'd better."

I thought he meant that there was field work to do; but before I had time to ask, the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl ran out and jumped in beside me. She was "rigged up" so prettily, with so many ribbons flying, that I instantly forgot everything that went before. The other girls and Grandmother Ruth had come out on the piazza to see us off.

"Good-by! Good-by!" they cried. "Have a nice time."

What a bewilderingly lively companion that girl proved to be! She praised Whistle; she adored him, she said. She wanted to drive him, and I had to let her for half a mile or so. Then her eye fell on a bunch of yellow primroses beside the road, and I had to stop and gather it for her, while she held the reins. We had not gone a hundred yards farther when she spied a magnificent great bulb thistle, covered with fine purple blossoms. I had to climb out and get that. The long thorns pricked her fingers, and I had to skin the thorns off for her—with much suffering to my own fingers. She smelled the blossoms, and told me how much she adored wild flowers. But she adored garden flowers, too, it seemed, for as we passed a farmhouse nothing would do but that I must call and beg a bunch of white clove pinks and a big white poppy.

Altogether it was long after ten o'clock when we reached the village. Fortunately, grandmother had written down my list of errands, or I should never have remembered half of them. The Four-Leaf-Clover Girl went to the grocery store with me, and while there hinted delicately how fond she was of candy.

After I had loaded in our packages and bought a pound of "chocolate drops," as they were then called, my companion remembered that she had always desired to visit her grandmother's grave in the cemetery, half a mile out of the village. So we drove to it, and there she left a part of her flowers. On returning through the village, too, she suddenly recollected that there was a letter she ought to write home, and begged me to wait in front of the post office while she ran in, bought envelope and paper, and scribbled her letter.

When she came out, at the end of fifteen or twenty minutes, she told me that she had had to write more than she had at first intended to write. By that time it was almost noon. In fact, just as we started on from the post office,



A CROWD BEGAN TO GATHER ROUND US.

the whistle of the woolen factory. blew the noon hour. At the sound of the blast, our horse, the handsome sorrel, Whistle, stopped short in the middle of the street!

I spoke to him twice, shook the reins and urged him to go on. Mount Washington itself never stood more immovable. His forward feet were obdurately set.

"Why, what's the matter with Whistle?" cried the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl, now much occupied with the chocolate drops.

I had no idea myself. Getting out, I looked him over carefully. He did not appear to be sick. Feeling a little indignant, I got in, took up the reins, and gave him two smart cuts with the whip. I might as well have lashed the wooden horse of Troy! He did not even look round.

I jumped out again, took him by the bit and tried to lead him forward, but I could not induce him to take a step. It was very mortifying. The Four-Leaf-Clover Girl would never want to ride with me again, I thought. By that time, too, the employees from the woolen mill were streaming out along both sidewalks. The spectacle of a young fellow pulling at a horse's head in the street, with a girl in the wagon, at once attracted attention. A crowd began to gather round us.

"Put the whip to him!" some one suggested.

"Get in and give him a smart cut!" another advised.

"He's balky. Needs a good warming up."

An old man came and took him by the head, and then spoke to him in a kind, superior way. Whistle did not even notice him. Both his front feet were set and his eyes fixed. Evidently he had made up his mind to stand there.

Finally all of the crowd except a few hectoring boys left us to work out our own salvation. I can hardly describe what weight of shame oppressed me. Although it was not exactly my fault, I felt guilty nevertheless. I dared not look at the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl!

There Whistle stood as firm as a rock. I did not know what to do. After a few minutes of frantic scheming, I decided to go to the village livery stable and to hire a team and driver to take the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl home. I would stay by Whistle until he chose to change his mind, if he ever should do so.

Just then my companion in trouble made a suggestion. "Perhaps he's hungry," she said.

I had seen him well fed shortly before we set off from home and knew that he could not be very hungry; but as the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl continued to insist that that was the trouble, I at last went to the nearest general store and bought four quarts of oats. After borrowing an empty soap box, I came back to our still obdurate steed. At sight of the oats, Whistle at once showed signs of interest. I set the box before him in the road, let down his head, and resumed my seat in the wagon.

"There, I told you he was hungry!" cried the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl triumphantly.

But I was already thinking of other things, particularly of the old squire's advice to get home before noon. I began to smell a rat. Why had the old squire been delayed an hour at the village that day when he first brought Whistle home? Why was Addison gone so long at Lurvey's Mills? And lastly, why had Senator Morrill swapped his horse for White-foot? I began to suspect that it all had something to do with noon whistles.

We sat there for fifteen or twenty minutes longer, while Whistle ate his oats and nuzzled for the last kernel in the box. Between hope and doubt, I then shook the reins, and suggested to him to move on. He started instantly, with a toss of his mane, ran over the box, and went off up the street at a great pace.

We covered the six miles between the village and home in about half an hour. As we dashed up the lane and stopped at the door, the family flocked out to greet us.

"Oh, we've had such a funny experience!" cried the Four-Leaf-Clover Girl. "Whistle got so hungry that he couldn't walk! He stopped, and we had to feed him before he would come home!"

The old squire glanced at me, and I could see his face working oddly. Addison, too, was shaking, although he managed to suppress his laughter. They both followed me to the stable.

"Stopped when the noon whistle blew, didn't he?" said Addison. "How long did it take you to start him?"

"Over an hour."

"Well, it took me four hours over at Lurvey's Mills," Addison said. "You did well if you got away in an hour! But I didn't think to feed him," he added. "I was mad enough with him to cut his yellow hide off!"

"That was a good idea—feeding him," said the old squire. "We'll remember that. I didn't think of it that day I first came home

with him. I sat behind him about an hour, down at the village, and would have been there longer if a teamster with a load of barrels hadn't run into us and shoved us along."

"Do you suppose Senator Morrill knew about this?" I asked.

The old squire's eye twinkled. "He assured me that the name of Whistle had nothing to do with his wind and that the horse was perfectly sound," he said. "I suppose it slipped his mind to tell me about this other thing."

We had Whistle for two or three years afterwards. That one trick of his was the only

"out" about him. When he heard a noon whistle blow, he would stop short and would not stir a peg until he had been fed. How he had come to take up so stubborn a trick we never learned; it probably was from injudicious treatment on the part of some previous owner.

However, we got on with Whistle without much trouble, for in every other way he was a splendid horse; and after my experience in the village we always kept a little bag of oats under the wagon seat with which to feed him whenever an inconvenient whistle blew.

woman of fashion. With Isabel St. Eustace for your wife, you would have been wretched, and I thank God that the bond between you is severed."

Edward took his mother's hand tenderly and respectfully in his own, as he replied:

"You are right, mother, she is not worthy of my regret. One woman like yourself is enough to raise the female sex to an elevation becoming the purest virtue, but alas! all women are not formed of the same precious stuff. And now, mother, it only remains for me to depart for Europe, whither my thoughts and wishes have so long been wandering. The spell of my love for the *fancied* Miss St. Eustace—not the *real* one—has bound me here. But that is over, and I am free to go. Thank God, I can cross the Atlantic heart-whole!"

Mrs. Richardson sighed; the struggle of parting with her son, even for his benefit, anguished her; but what will not the love of a mother sacrifice! Two weeks afterwards, Edward Richardson was in Boston, from whence he was to sail on the following day for Liverpool. A voyage to Europe had been a life ambition to him, and now he was about to be gratified. An artist by nature, as well as by education, he was going to study with a distinguished German painter, and commune with the immortal shades of genius which hang about the precincts of sacred Rome. On the day following his arrival in Boston, as he was walking down Cambridge Street, he was accosted by the familiar cry:

"Buy my candy, sir?"

But the voice of the speaker was so singularly sweet, that it attracted the attention of Mr. Richardson, and he stopped to look at the face of the little merchant. As he did so, the stereotyped expression was repeated, though fainter and with a tremor of timidity in the tones. Richardson started on beholding the quaint vision before him. A girl, apparently thirteen years of age, but very small and slight, almost to frailty; her face was browned by exposure to sun and wind, and furrowed with lines of care, painful to behold in a child like her. But nothing could obscure the witching loveliness of her expression, or the rare combination of features. Her hair, a neglected mass of tangled amber, fell down her shoulders to her waist, unconfined by comb or ribbon; and in its lights and shadows was a richness and depth which Richardson would have given worlds for the power of transferring to canvass in all their rich perfection. Her eyes were dark as the clouds of stormy midnight; and the small, compressed lips and full Grecian nose gave a look of firmness, as well as sweetness, to the whole face. Richardson was strongly interested in the candy-girl, and with the characteristic of a Yankee he showed that interest by plying her with questions.

"What is your name, my child, and where do you live?"

"My name is Melicent Warden, and I live in Hanover Street, with Aunt Scott."

"A relative—ah?"

"No, Aunt Scott is no relation to me," returned the girl, sadly, "but she is a very good woman—almost as poor as I am—and when my papa and mama died, three years ago, with the cholera, she took me into her room, and I've stayed with her ever since. So I love her for being kind to me, and that makes me call her Aunt Scott."

"And have you no home, only this with Aunt Scott? Do you like to stand here in the sun to sell candy?"

"No, to both questions, sir. Aunt Scott's is all the home I have; and sometimes I get weary of trying to sell my candy. My heart swells up in my throat often when I ask fine ladies and gentlemen to buy, and get only a cross word for return."

Richardson stood a moment in silent thought, and an expression of intense satisfaction lighted up his handsome face. He laid his hand on the little girl's shoulder, and said:

"How would you like to go away from this life forever? to live in the country with the birds and flowers, and look out upon the grassy hills and the broad, green meadows? How would it please you, Melicent Warden?"

The child's eyes kindled with enthusiasm at the picture, and she drew eagerly towards him.

"O, sir, I should be so happy, it seems as if I should die!"

The large eyes dilated with hopeful anticipation, and the red lips grew moist and tender with the thought.

"Well, Melicent, my mother—a good and true woman, just such one as I would place my dearest friend with—resides about forty miles from here, in a farm-house. She is lonely now, for her only son is on the eve of taking a long journey. Will you go and cheer her and comfort her while I am gone?"

"If you will but let me. I know I should love your mother, if she is like—like—" the girl blushed, hesitated and finished the sentence abruptly—"if she is good."

Richardson smiled at what he knew to be her meaning, although her modesty forbade her giving it utterance. He took her hand in his, and drawing her away, said:

"Come, let us go to your home, to your Aunt Scott; if she gives her consent to your leaving her, to-morrow's sun shall not set upon you homeless."

Learning more of the happy child at every step, Mr. Richardson felt pleased that in his absence he could send to his lonesome mother so pleasant a companion. He found Aunt Scott loth to part with Melicent, although the old lady was glad of her pet's good fortune. Aunt Scott was very poor herself, but there are charity and kindness to be found in the lower ranks of life as well as in the higher. This lowly woman had taken the motherless child of poverty, and cared for her as her own. In another world she shall receive her reward.

With many a kind, though rude word of counsel, Aunt Scott gave Melicent Warden into the hands of Richardson, and the young man and the child entered a coach and were driven to the

depot. In the waiting-room he penned a letter to his mother, briefly detailing his meeting with the girl, and his wish that she might share with him his mother's love and interest. Then consigning his protegee to the care of the gentlemanly conductor, Mr. C—, he gave Melicent his hand to say good-by. There were tears in her eyes as she grasped the proffered hand in both of hers, and stooping down she pressed her lips passionately upon it; and then ejaculating, "God in heaven bless you, Edward Richardson!" she turned away her head, and looked at him no more. A moment later the bell rang, the great engine hissed and groaned, and Melicent was on her way to Wheatwold.

Edward had not miscalculated his mother's goodness of heart, and the little candy-girl met with a warm reception from the excellent lady. O, but it was like Paradise to the orphan, to sit in those quiet rooms, looking out upon the green swell of the great hills, and the broad stretches of the intervals; listening to the harmony of the birds and bees, and the clear, silver stream. The soul, as well as the body of the girl, grew and expanded in the new atmosphere, and under Mrs. Richardson's teachings, a rich flower was germinating into perfect blossom, in the quiet shades of Wheatwold.

Time passed on, and three years fled into the great past. Melicent was now sixteen, a glowing confirmation of her youth's promise. A soul above the grovellers of earth, a mind of singular depth and brilliancy, united to her great beauty of person, made her much admired and sought after among those with whom she associated. So she was the comfort of her benefactress, and every day the widow blessed God for the soothing, cheering presence of the quondam candy-girl.

Edward wrote often, and these letters were rare treats to the soul of Melicent. They were full of brilliant accounts of the countries through which he travelled, the magnificent scenery he viewed, interspersed with glowing pictures of the sweet sunsets, the mellow moonlight, and the impassioned, crimson skies hung over the beautiful land of the Orient. He said but little of his success in his art; perhaps because he thought so very much of it. Mrs. Richardson often wondered at his silence upon the point, but after a while she was content with the few vague hints which he saw fit to throw out in some of his letters. From these she gathered that he was doing well, at least, and she rested her anxiety concerning him, on the supposition that fortune had been kind to him. He seemed rather to avoid alluding to his return home, saying he would come "by-and-by," or "after a time." And Mrs. Richardson supposed that, from attachment, it was hard for a nature like Edward's, to break away from the classic lands where he lingered, and so she forgave him for remaining so long from the heart that throbbled but in his happiness, and the home which only waited his presence to attain perfection of joy.

In the meantime, the beauty and excellence of Melicent Warden had won her many suitors from among the rich and poor, but she seemed in no hurry to take upon herself the obligations of a wife. George Camfield, a rich young farmer, was the most persevering in his attentions, although he met with no more favor than others. He was a worthy fellow, handsome, well educated, and good-hearted, but Melicent did not love him. She had twice refused the offer of his hand, and he, with commendable zeal, seemed to justify the opinion of the gossips that he intended to give her a chance of doing the same thing a third time.

There was a great sensation in the aristocratic circles of Anthel, a city some five miles from the residence of Mrs. Richardson, all about a wonderful Signor Leonza, an Italian artist. One of his pictures had won the first prize in the Academy of Arts established there, and it was said that his genius and success were wonderful. Moreover, by the next steamer this paragon of painters was to arrive in Anthel, to remain a short time, during which he would accommodate sitters with their portraits.

Well, Signor Alfieri Leonza came, and for once report had not spoken too much in his praise. He was about twenty-seven years old, tall, and strongly proportioned. His hair and eyes were intensely dark, and the lower portion of his face was covered with a heavy beard and moustache. A very handsome and *distingue* looking man was the Signor Alfieri, and for chivalrous politeness to the ladies and his admirable courtesy to the gentlemen, he was soon a great favorite with the entire town. Sitters crowded in upon him, his studio was thronged, and it became quite the rage to sit to the elegant artist. Ladies blushed and smiled at his well-turned compliments, and many hearts beat faster in his fascinating presence.

Isabel St. Eustace—still unmarried, but more beautiful and haughty than ever—at the solicitation of some young friend, as well as prompted by her own curiosity, paid Signor Alfieri a visit. She was a splendid looking creature, arrayed in a robe of crimson velvet, with her hair banded back from her regal brow, and her pride and grace regnant at every motion. But Signor Alfieri, much to Isabel's secret chagrin, did not appear in the least moved by this gorgeous display of beauty. He greeted her coldly, but politely, and handed her a chair with dignified composure.

"Will madame—or signora—your pardon; will signora sit for a portrait to-day?"

"If it will be convenient—"

Isabel hesitated and colored under the keen scrutiny of the eyes of the nonchalant artist. She was ashamed of herself for betraying the singular power of the man over her, and she could not fathom nor explain the interest she felt in Signor Leonza.

Without vouchsafing another word, he arranged her for a sitting, and the work of painting went on rapidly, and uninterruptedly. Occasionally he glanced up at her face, but these glances were coldly scrutinizing, and Isabel wondered within herself where the mooted gallantry of Signor Leonza had flown. At

[Written for Ballou's Pictorial.]

THE ARTIST'S BRIDE.

BY CLARA AUGUSTA.

"NEVER, Edward Richardson, I tell you never!"

The lip of the beautiful speaker curled in contempt, and a gleam of ill-concealed impatience shone in the depths of her darkly splendid eyes.

"Pardon me, Isabel—Miss St. Eustace; but will nothing change you? May I not cherish hope under any circumstances?"

"Again? Sir, you are insufferable! I repeat to you, the daughter of Reginald St. Eustace will never demean herself by marrying the son of a pauper—even though that son requests it."

Ere she had finished speaking, the young man had risen to his feet, and with folded arms and impassible brow, he stood up before her, waiting for the conclusion of her speech.

"Miss St. Eustace," he said, at length, "I thank you sincerely for opening my eyes to your rightful character, for showing yourself to me in your true light. It will save me much suffering, for otherwise I should have believed you the pure and noble embodiment of woman which I once fancied you. Your contempt of my humble birth has saved me from regrets. When next we meet, it may be under changed circumstances; but be assured I shall be most happy to welcome and renew the acquaintance of the daughter of Reginald St. Eustace. Adieu!" And before she could reply to his haughty salutation, he had left the apartment.

Miss St. Eustace leaned back in the damask cushioned chair, and while an angry flush burnt her brow, and the light of pride and pique played on her features, she exclaimed:

"Presuming upstart! To think that I would unite my fate with his! Because I deigned to notice his paltry genius by purchasing one of his pictures, and encouraging him to paint others at my order, he has taken the liberty of falling in love with me, and asking a return! His airs, too!—becoming the possessor of half a million, rather than a penniless artist! If he had only been wealthy—but pshaw! what matters it to me?"

Isabel St. Eustace arose and rang the bell for her maid to attend her to her drawing-room. At her elaborate toilet for the evening assembly we will leave her and follow Edward Richardson, the scorned and discarded lover. From the princely abode of Mr. St. Eustace to the humble cottage of his mother, he bent his steps; and never had the quiet sitting-room, with its plain chairs and curtains of white muslin, looked more beautiful in his eyes than they now did. The sweet-scented geranium in the earthen vase on the window sill glowed with a deeper green, and filled the air with a richer fragrance. The pale, thoughtful face of his widowed mother wore a holier light, and her word of greeting possessed for him a new charm.

He was disenchanted of wealth and show, and vanity and selfishness. He was thankful that he had been born poor, if riches took away the nobility of soul which should be every man's richest dower. So he looked around the humble room, and at his mother's face, and a feeling of contentment stole into his being. He sat down by his parent's side, and without hesitation told her of the love which had grown upon him for Isabel St. Eustace, of the struggles of pride and affection which had agitated him, of his final confession, and her open and unmitigated contempt. Mrs. Richardson listened attentively until he had finished, and then she said:

"My dear Edward, I have feared this for a long time, and for your sake I have dreaded it. But I find I need not. You have too much spirit and sense to be affected by the words of a heartless

the expiration of half an hour she dismissed her for the day, telling her to come again on the third day from that, at the earliest hour after dinner.

Isabel went home to ponder on the strange conduct of the signor, and to try to shut out his image from her mind. She was fascinated by the expression of his countenance, so indicative of nobility and gentleness; his coldness piqued her, and for the first time since Edward Richardson knelt at her feet, the heart of the heiress-belle was touched. She was both interested and mystified. There was something familiar in the face of the artist, something remembered in the tones of his voice, but she sought vainly to give it individuality. So at last she went to sleep, and in her dreams the proud, handsome Italian was ever before her, with that calm, half-scornful smile, and brilliant eye.

On the appointed day, when she went to the studio for her second sitting, Signor Leonza withdrew a curtain, and showed her the portrait finished! She was astonished at its correctness, and begged to know how he had managed so rapidly from only one sitting.

"The expression was very easy to get, signora; it is one, uniform, for the most part. A face like yours is no intricate study, but all is open and plain as the stately dignity which crowns the forests of November!"

Isabel's brow flushed; she did not know how to construe his words, but she bowed, and he said no more on the subject. They met often, at the ball, party, concert, and social levee; their acquaintance did not seem to progress, and yet their intimacy did, for almost every morning found Signor Leonza at the house of Reginald St. Eustace. They were drawn together, Isabel and the signor, by a singular and mysterious bond; Isabel cold and constrained in his presence, yet with an *Ætna* of love burning for him in her breast; and he polite, social and self-possessed. She, the proud and haughty Isabel, learned to hang upon his words, to live in the light of his dark countenance, to prize the flowers he had trodden, and the air he breathed! She loved him fiercely and wildly, as only one of her passionate and fiery nature could love, and yet he never spoke to her kindly, much less tenderly. No sign, no token had this love of hers to feed upon, and yet it lived and grew stronger and deeper every day. It might be hopeless and unreturned, but it was her crowning glory, and the knowledge that she adored him filled her with thrilling gladness.

One morning as Leonza was making his adieu, he dropped his glove, and went away without perceiving his loss. Isabel sprang forward and seizing the glove, pressed it madly, passionately to her lips.

"O Heaven!" she said, "why should I allow this terrible passion to triumph over me?"

"It is my glove, signora," said the voice of Signor Leonza at her side.

She glanced at him in stupefied amazement. An overpowering sense of her humiliation swept over her, and she sank down on a sofa and moaned out:

"O why, why did I do it? Is it a crime?"

She looked up into his face with so much anguish in her gaze, that his hard look softened, and he started towards her. She dropped her eyes, and her lips said:

"You have my secret! O, be honorable! Go and leave me!"

He only replied by sitting down by her side. When she looked up, he said:

"Miss St. Eustace, lift up your head and tell me, do you love me?"

There was a magnetism in his fixed gaze that with all her haughty pride she was powerless to resist. Her red lips parted, her eyes dilated with the intensity of her feelings; she answered him—for her life she could not have prevented it.

"I do!"

A slight smile of satisfaction crept over his face, followed immediately by a shade of sorrow. She marked it all, and by that irresistible fascination which she ever felt in his presence, she drew towards him until his breath was on her lips, and his hair touching the waves of jet upon her forehead. One wild, impassioned look she bent upon him, and for a moment only her love spoke; her pride was ignored and forgotten.

"O, Leonza, kiss me once—once! My soul will live upon it all my life! Kiss me, and I will be done!"

He put his arms around her, and took her closely and strongly to his breast. An instant he held her there, her cheek touching his, her eyes blazing into his own. Then he kissed her, a long, passionate kiss, such as we press upon the lips of those whom we love with the whole strength of our being, or upon those of dear friends that we are parting with forever. A little brief period she did not stir; then she arose, and putting off the embrace of Leonza, stood up before him, the cold and proud Isabel St. Eustace.

"The last moment of weakness is over! Signor Leonza, if that be your name, I thank you for the permitted indulgence of that one moment. I can live on a kiss all my life."

He arose, took both her hands kindly and respectfully in his, and said:

"Miss St. Eustace, we have both been to blame. Once I loved you—ah, you recognize me now! I loved you, and you refused me. Then I determined at sometime to win your affections out of revenge. O, it was bitter, bitter! To think of the suffering—but let it all go; we will bury the past, and henceforth be firm, true friends."

She took the offer of friendship calmly and quietly, grasped the friendly hand, and met the friendly eye. She looked steadily in his face as she replied:

"Edward Richardson, my friend, I congratulate you upon the fame you have won; I glory in it; henceforth your success shall be my happiness. Now leave me!"

He obeyed her, and the haughty woman was alone with her thoughts.

Mrs. Richardson and Melicent were sitting together one morning late in the brilliant month of October, talking of Edward. Freely did the doting mother speak of her son to the girl she had adopted; and as for Melicent, it was joy to her to listen to his praises. In the midst of their conversation, the door opened softly, and Signor Leonza appeared. Mrs. Richardson arose to greet him as a stranger, but the faithful instinct of Melicent penetrated the change. She sprang eagerly towards him, exclaiming, joyfully:

"Edward Richardson, my benefactor!"

A moment later, and mother and son were in each other's arms. Then, when the first warm welcome was over, he turned to his protegee. She gave him her hand shyly, and her eyes thanked him for all he had done for her, though her lips refused to put the gratitude into words. Edward looked down upon her with surprise and admiration; his little waif had grown even lovelier than he had ever dreamed, and it must be confessed that he had thought a great deal of her during his absence, and wondered unceasingly if she had fulfilled her youthful promise of beauty.

Over the dinner-table he told them all that had befallen him since his departure; of his studies, his progress, his success, and the wealth which was fast making him its possessor. And all this time his eyes recurved to the face of Melicent, as if seeking there for encouragement and approbation. Thus it went on for weeks and months, and while the great world of Anthiel mourned and wondered over the disappearance of the artist-star, he was willing away his time in an obscure farm-house, with only his mother and Melicent for company.

But he was not happy; a strange unrest had seized upon him, and he was uncomfortable the entire time. The lovers of Melicent troubled him; he despised George Camfield, and at times grew almost angry with Melicent that she did not crush them all, at once. Their rustic attentions caused him many heart-burnings; he could not bear that the fair girl should smile on any but himself, or exert her powers of conversation for the pleasure of others; he was selfishly jealous of her, and some one says that jealousy cannot be born without love.

One morning, early in the spring, he met Melicent and young Camfield coming down the lane together. For once his passion triumphed over his usual caution, and he stepped up to the side of the girl.

"Melicent," he said, "will you not finish your walk with me?"

She started and blushed, but bowing to Camfield, turned away at the side of Richardson. He drew her arm within his own, retaining his hold upon her hand, and tightening the clasp as he spoke:

"Melicent, do you respect me?"

"Mr. Richardson, how can you doubt it?"

"I do not; I only wish to prove it. Will you give me a proof?"

"Try me."

"Then, Melicent, never speak to Mr. Camfield again; it pains me every time I see him in your presence!"

"Sir, I do not understand you!"

"Nor can I explain; it may seem strange to you—but will you gratify me?"

"I will obey you," she said, her whole face lighting up with confidence and trust.

He stooped down and kissed her forehead.

"Enough, Melicent; I thank you."

He felt quiet and assured, but this feeling of contentment was not to last long. There was a new arrival in Wheatwold—a young physician, handsome, wealthy and talented; and when he saw Melicent, he loved her. His visits to the cottage became frequent, and he was hardly content away from the society of her he loved.

There was an excursion party made up from the village, to visit Glen Falls, some three miles distant, and Dr. Harvey Braynard escorted Melicent Warden, much to Edward's chagrin. He, Edward, attended a sour old maid, for as long as Melicent was not at his side, he cared not who took her place.

A little distance from the Falls the road wound along the precipice which overhung Witch's Gorge, a deep valley where the river foamed and roared in mad power. Just before reaching this wild and dangerous place, the horse which Melicent rode took fright, and the efforts of his rider to curb him availed nothing. On, on he dashed, fiery and maddened, nearing every moment the fatal precipice!

Dr. Braynard flew after her, and Edward, frenzied and full of horror, urged his steed to the utmost. It was a wild race. Edward's horse gained—in a moment he was almost within touch—a leap, a plunge—Melicent went over the cliff! A groan of horror and anguish burst from the lips of Dr. Braynard; but Edward had no time for thought; he sprang from his horse, and down the frightful precipice after the lost girl. He found her there, lying on a low rock, beneath her dead horse, her clothes soiled with blood, and her face like the faces of those we see in coffins.

As though she had been an infant, he seized her in his arms, and bore her to the top of the precipice. Dr. Braynard came forward to examine her injuries, but Edward at first refused to permit him to touch her. He stood there with her in his arms, looking into her lifeless face with a dull stare. At last he was prevailed upon to allow a brief examination of her injuries, and Dr. Braynard announced an arm broken in two places, and a severe contusion of the left temple.

Edward rode his own horse, bearing Melicent, hardly restored to consciousness, on his bosom. Thus he took her home, and

through the long and tedious confinement which followed, he nursed her with more than womanly tenderness. Mrs. Richardson in vain besought him to take some rest; he would not leave her until her health and strength returned.

In the earliest hours of her convalescence, he told of his love, and asked her to be his wife; and with a heart full of joy she told him "yes." As soon as her health was won back, they were married very quietly in the little church on the green, and Isabel St. Eustace was at the wedding! Afterwards she went abroad, and it was seven years before her feet again pressed the shores of her native land. Seven years of wretched loneliness they were to her, and deep, unfathomable happiness to Edward Richardson and his trusting wife.

Miss St. Eustace, it was said, had refused many and brilliant offers of marriage, and now at thirty she was single, single for life. A month after her return home she was seized with a sudden illness, and she never went forth from that rich chamber more! Two brief months, and her friends with sincere grief closed her eyes in death. On the day of her funeral, Edward Richardson sought and obtained entrance to the room where the mortal part of Miss St. Eustace was sleeping. He gazed long and earnestly upon her beautiful face, and then bending over the coffin, he kissed her pale lips.